

CHAPTER 15

Ver. 1. *A soft answer turneth away wrath*, etc.] Mild words, gentle expressions, delivered with kindness and tenderness, humility and submission; these will work upon a man's passions, weaken his resentments, and break and scatter the storm of wrath raised in his breast, just breaking forth in a very boisterous and blustering manner; so high winds are sometimes laid by soft showers. Thus the Ephraimites were pacified by Gideon's mild answer; and David by Abigail's very submissive and respectful address, (^{<0700>}Judges 8:1-3 ^{<0255>}1 Samuel 25:25-32);

but grievous words stir up anger; such as are rough and menacing, scornful and sneering, reproachful and reviling, proud, haughty, and overbearing; like those of Jephthah to the Ephraimites; and of the Ephraimites to the Gileadites; and of Nabal to David's servants, concerning him; and of Rehoboam, who answered the people roughly: in all which instances anger was stirred up, and either were or like to have been attended with bad consequences, (^{<0700>}Judges 12:1-4) (^{<0250>}1 Samuel 25:10,11,21,22 ^{<1123>}1 Kings 12:13,14). Or a "word" causing, or rather expressing, "grief"^{f427}; upbraiding others with being the cause of grief to them.

Ver. 2. *The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright*, etc.] As the heart of a wise and good man is filled with useful knowledge, civil, moral, spiritual, and evangelical; so he takes care to communicate it, at proper times and seasons, in proper places, and to proper persons; adapting it to their case and circumstances, so as it may be for their comfort, edification, and instruction, and minister grace unto them; which is using knowledge "well", as the word^{f428} signifies: such an use of it recommends it, and makes it appear beautiful and lovely, decorates and adorns it. Thus every good man, out of the good treasure of knowledge in his heart, brings forth his good things seasonably, to the use of edifying; in like manner, ministers of the word, scribes well instructed in the things of God, bring forth both new and old, to the profit of those to whom they minister; so Christ, as man and Mediator, had the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to weary souls;

but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness; their knowledge, as they take it to be, but it is no other than folly; this they throw out in great plenty, in a hurry, without fear or wit; they "babble" it out, as the word^{f429}

signifies, as water out of a fountain; their hearts are full of it, and their mouths proclaim it, (^{<31223>}Proverbs 12:23).

Ver. 3. *The eyes of the Lord [are] in every place*, etc.] Which are expressive of his omniscience, of the full, clear, distinct, and perfect knowledge, which he has of all creatures and things; so that nothing is hid from him, but all open and manifest to him; as they are to Christ the essential Word, (^{<30413>}Hebrews 4:13); and also of the providence of God with respect to all persons in general, and to his own people in particular; and as he is infinite and immense, omnipresent and in all places of the world, so his omniscience and providence reach everywhere, to places most distant and secret, and to persons in them, who cannot be concealed from him, since he fills heaven and earth, (^{<24223>}Jeremiah 23:23,24);

beholding the evil and the good; meaning not evil things and good things, though that is true; the one he beholds with dislike, the other with pleasure; but evil men and good men: he beholds them as from a watch tower, as the word ^{f430} signifies, from above, from heaven, where he is; (see ^{<49313>}Psalm 33:13,14). By “evil” men may be meant both profane sinners and carnal professors; such as are more openly wicked, and declare their sin, as Sodom, or more secretly so; he sees into all the wickedness there is in their hearts, all their secret devices against his people; the works done by them in the dark, as well as their more open ones; and his eyes are upon all of them, to bring them into judgment at the last day: his eyes are particularly on the proud, to abase them; such as are under a disguise of religion, and have a form of godliness, he has his eyes upon; he sees through all their disguises; he knows on what foot they took up their profession; he discerns between that and true grace; he sees how they retain their lusts with their profession; observes the springs and progress of their apostasy; and will fix his eyes on the man without a righteousness, not having on the wedding garment, and order him into outer darkness. He also beholds “good” men; he sees all their bad things, their sins, and corrects them for them; their good things, their graces, and the exercise of them; their good works, the fruits of his own grace; their weaknesses, and supports and strengthens them; their wants, and supplies them; their persons, and never withdraws his eyes from them: these are on them continually, to protect and defend them; nor will he leave them till he has brought them safe to heaven; (see ^{<31419>}1 Chronicles 16:9).

Ver. 4. *A wholesome tongue [is] a tree of life*, etc.] A tongue that delivers out salutary instructions, wholesome advice and counsel; a “healing tongue”,^{f431} as it may be rendered, which pacifies contending parties, and heals the divisions between them; to have the benefit of such a man’s company and conversation is like being in paradise. Such is the tongue of a Gospel minister, which delivers out the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ; sound speech and doctrines, which cannot be condemned; healing truths to wounded consciences, such as peace, pardon, righteousness, and atonement by the blood of Christ. These are the means of quickening dead sinners, reviving and comforting distressed ones, and show the way of eternal life unto them;

but perverseness therein [is] a breach in the spirit; impure, unchaste, unsavoury, and corrupt language, does mischief to the spirits of men; evil communications corrupt the heart and manners, defile the soul and the conversation; these and unsound doctrines eat as a canker; and as they make the heart of God’s people sad, whom he would not have made sad; so they bring distress and despair into the spirits of others, and make sad wounds and breaches there, which are never healed, and that both in the spirits of speakers and hearers; for damnable heresies bring swift destruction on the propagators of them, and them that receive them.

Ver. 5. *A fool despiseth his father’s instruction*, etc.] They are fools that despise any instruction that is wise, good, and profitable; and especially a father’s instruction, whose love, tender affection, and care, will not suffer him, knowingly, to give any but what is good and wholesome: wherefore to despise it is not only a contempt of his authority, but a slight of his love; which are both very aggravating, and sufficiently demonstrate his folly; and of which he may be himself convinced when it is too late, and say, “how have I hated instruction [and] despised reproof?” (⁴¹⁵²Proverbs 5:12). He is a fool that despises the instruction of anyone superior to him in years and experience; of ministers of the word; and especially of our Father which is in heaven, declared in the sacred Scriptures, which are written for instruction in righteousness;

but he that regardeth reproof is prudent; the reproof of a father, whose corrections are to be submitted to, and received with reverence; and especially of the Father of spirits, whose rebukes are in love, and for profit and advantage; yea, he is a wise man that regards the reproof of the word

of God, and the ministers of it; and indeed of any Christian, whether his superior, equal, or inferior, as David did, (⁴³¹Psalm 141:5).

Ver. 6. *In the house of the righteous [is] much treasure*, etc.] God sometimes blesses the righteous with great riches, as he did Abraham; or, however, if they have but little, it is better than the riches of many wicked; because they have what they have with a blessing, and they are content with it: and they have abundance of spiritual treasure; they have God for their portion; Christ, and all good things along with him; the rich graces of the Spirit; a rich experience of the grace of God; and all this is but a pledge and earnest of what they shall possess hereafter;

but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble; they have much trouble in getting their riches, by which they pierce themselves through with many sorrows; they have much trouble in keeping them; cannot rest nor sleep because of their abundance, lest it should be taken away from them; and they have much trouble in parting with them, when they are, by one providence or another, stripped of them; and, besides, they have them with a curse, and are ever attended with uneasiness, on one account or another.

Ver. 7. *The lips of the wise disperse knowledge*, etc.] Scatter it about for the benefit of others; they are communicative and diffusive of it unto others, that fruit may abound to their account: so the first ministers of the Gospel diffused the savour of the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel in every place; their words went into all the earth, and their sound to the end of the world; and so every Gospel minister will speak according to the oracles of God, and according to the abilities and measure of the gift which he has received; and to the utmost of his power feeds souls with knowledge and understanding;

but the heart of the foolish [doth] not so; does not disperse knowledge, for he has no solid substantial knowledge in him: or, “the heart of the foolish [is] not right”^{f432}; it is full of folly and wickedness: or “the heart of the foolish [does] not [disperse that which is] right”^{f433}; true and right things, and the knowledge of them; but, on the contrary, as in (⁴³²Proverbs 15:2), “pours out foolishness”.

Ver. 8. *The sacrifice of the wicked [is] an abomination to the Lord*, etc.] Even those sacrifices which were of divine appointment under the former dispensation, when offered by wicked men, without faith in Christ, without any sense of sin, repentance for it, and reformation from it; when these

were used as a cloak for sin, under which they sheltered and satisfied themselves, and went on in sin; when they brought them “with a wicked mind”, as in (²⁰²⁷Proverbs 21:27); when either what they brought were not according to the law, the lame and the blind; or were not their own, but robbery for burnt sacrifice; or supposing that these would atone for their sins of themselves; when either of these, or all this, was the case, it was an abomination to the Lord; see (²⁰¹¹Isaiah 1:11-15 61:8 66:3). Wherefore much more must Pagan sacrifices be an abomination to him; which were not of his appointing, and were offered to devils, and not to him; and which were many of them very inhuman and shocking; as giving a man’s firstborn for his transgression, and the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul: and so likewise Papal sacrifices, the sacrifice of the mass; the bloodless sacrifice, the offering up again of the body and blood of Christ, they pretend to; which, as it is wicked and blasphemous, is an abomination to the Lord, and perhaps is chiefly intended. Sacrifice may stand for every religious duty performed by a wicked man, being hypocritically done, and with no good view; and all their good works, which seem to be so; and are either not according to the word and will of God, being never commanded by him, of which sort are many among the Papists; or they are not done in faith, and so sin, and do not spring from love to God; but are done with a heart full of enmity to him, and are not directed to his glory: in short, whatever is done by them, let it have ever such an appearance of devotion and goodness; yet if it is placed in the room of Christ, and used to the setting aside of his righteousness, satisfaction, and sacrifice, it is an abomination to the Lord;

but the prayer of the upright [is] his delight: the prayer of such, whose hearts are right with God; who have right spirits renewed in them; are Israelites indeed; have the truth of grace and root of the matter in them; are honest, sincere, and upright in heart: the prayer of such, which is an inwrought one, wrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, and so comes from God, and is his own breathing in him, must be well pleasing to him; that which is fervent, earnest, and importunate, which cometh not out of feigned lips, but from the heart, and is put up with a true heart, in the sincerity of it; the prayer of faith, the cry of the humble; the prayer which is addressed to God as a Father, in the name of Christ the Mediator, which comes perfumed with the incense of his mediation, introduced with the celebration of the divine perfections, contains humble confessions of sin and unworthiness, ascribes all blessings to the grace of God, and expresses

thankfulness for favours received, is very acceptable and delightful to God; though it is the prayer of a poor, mean, despicable creature in his own eyes, and in the eyes of others, (~~1927~~Psalm 102:17 9:12 ~~2014~~Song of Solomon 2:14 ~~2181~~Luke 18:11-14). This stands opposed to the pompous rites and ceremonies, the gaudy worship and costly sacrifices, of wicked men; such as used by the Papists.

Ver. 9. *The way of the wicked [is] an abomination unto the Lord,* etc.]

The way his heart devises, which he chooses and delights in, in which he walks; nor will he leave it, nor can he be diverted from it, but by the powerful grace of God. This is a way not good, but evil, and so an abomination to the Lord; and the whole tenor and course of his life, which is meant by his way being evil: hence his sacrifices, and all his external duties of religion performed by him, are abominable to the Lord; for, while he continues in a course of sin, all his religious exercises will be of no avail, cannot be pleasing and acceptable to God;

but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness; either after a justifying righteousness; not the righteousness of the law, which the carnal Jews followed after, but did not attain unto; nor is righteousness to be had by the works of the law, nor any justification by it, nor can a man be acceptable to God on account of it; but the righteousness of Christ, which he has wrought out, and is revealed in the Gospel: to follow after this supposes a want of one; a sense of that want; a view of the glory, fulness, suitableness, and excellency of Christ's righteousness; an eager desire after it, sometimes expressed by hungering and thirsting after it, as here by a pursuit of it; which means no other than an earnest and importunate request to be found in it: and such, as they shall be satisfied or filled with it, so they are loved by the Lord, and are acceptable to him through the righteousness they are seeking after: or else it may be understood of following after true holiness of heart and life, without which there is no seeing the Lord; and though perfection in it is not attainable in this live, yet a gracious soul presses after it, which is well pleasing in the sight of God.

Ver. 10. *Correction [is] grievous unto him that forsaketh the way,* etc.]

The right way, the way of God; the way of his commandments: the Vulgate Latin version is, "the way of life"; the same with the way of righteousness, which apostates, having known and walked in, turn aside from; (see ~~6025~~2 Peter 2:15,21). And such deserve severe correction, the chastisement of a cruel one, correction in wrath and hot displeasure; which, when they have,

is very disagreeable to them; they behave under it like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and yet they are but dealt righteously with. Or the words may be rendered, “he [has had] bad discipline” or “instruction^{f434} that forsakes the way”; due care has not been taken of him; he has not been properly instructed, nor seasonably corrected; had he, he would not easily have departed from the way in which he should go; (see ^{<1216>}Proverbs 22:6). The Targum is,

“the discipline of an evil man causes his way to err;”

or him to err from his way;

[and] he that hateth reproof shall die; that hates the reproof of parents, masters, and ministers of the word; as he may be said to do that neglects and rejects it, and does not act agreeably to it: and such a man, dying in impenitence and without faith in Christ, dies in his sins; and sometimes shamefully, or a shameful death, as the Septuagint and Arabic versions, or an untimely one; as well as dies the second death, an eternal one.

Ver. 11. *Hell and destruction [are] before the Lord*, etc.] Or “the grave”^{f435}, which is the pit of destruction; where bodies being put, putrefy, and are destroyed by worms: this is known by the Lord, even the grave of everyone from the beginning; the graves of Adam, Abel, Abraham; he knows where their dust lies, and will raise it up again at the last day. Hades, or the invisible state of the departed, as the Septuagint has it, is manifest before him; he knows where departed spirits are; what their condition and employment be; and so the place and state of the damned, known by the name of “hell”; and may be called “destruction”, where soul and body are destroyed by the Lord with an everlasting destruction; and is the destruction which the broad way of sin leads unto. Now though we know not where this place is, who are there, and what the torments endured in it; yet all is before the Lord, and known to him: “tophet” is ordained of old; everlasting fire is prepared by the Lord for devils and wicked men; (see ^{<8316>}Job 26:6);

how much more then the hearts of the children of men? which, though desperately wicked, are known by him; who is the searcher of the hearts and the trier of the reins of the children of men: he to whom hell is naked, and can look into that outer darkness, the blackness of darkness, can look into a man’s heart, a second hell, in which all manner of wickedness is, and observe it all; he needs no testimony of man; he knows what is in man, all

his secret thoughts, wicked purposes, designs, and devices; (see ^{<417>}Jeremiah 17:9,10 ^{<412>}John 2:25 ^{<3412>}Hebrews 4:12,13).

Ver. 12. *A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him*, etc.] He that makes a jest of religion; scoffs at godliness and godly men; treats the Gospel and the ministers of it with contempt; makes a mock at good men, and all that is good; a pestilent fellow, as the Vulgate Latin version: such an one not only does not love, for more is intended than is expressed; but hates him that reproves him, and especially if publicly, (^{<3150>}Amos 5:10); he thinks ill of him; bears him a grudge, and abhors him; and speaks evil of him, and reproaches him; and does all he can to the injury of his person and name; hence the advice of the wise man, (^{<2107>}Proverbs 9:7,8). Some render it, he “loves not reproving himself”, or “to reprove himself”^{f436}; he does not care to look into his own heart and ways, or to call himself to an account for what he does; nor to check himself in the pursuit of sin, nor argue with and reprove himself for it;

neither will he go unto the wise; to the private houses of wise and good men; nor to the house of wisdom, or place of public instruction, where wise dispensers of the word give good advice and counsel; scorners do not choose to go to either, lest they should be reprov'd for their evil ways, and be advised leave them; neither of which is agreeable to them; (see ^{<411>}John 3:20,21).

Ver. 13. *A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance*, etc.] Or, a “joyful heart”^{f437}; that is joyful in the God of its salvation; that rejoices in Christ Jesus; is filled with joy and peace through believing in him, in his person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; that has a comfortable view of his justification by his righteousness, of peace and pardon by his blood, of the atonement of his sins by his sacrifice; to whom he has said, “be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee”, (^{<4112>}Matthew 9:2); who has peace in him, though tribulation in the world: as such a man’s heart must be made glad, this will make his countenance cheerful, or cause him to lift up his head with joy; as it is in natural things, so it is in spiritual ones;

but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken; a man is dejected, his spirits sink, and it is seen in his countenance: there is a great sympathy between the body and mind, the one is much affected by the other; when the heart is full of sorrow, the animal spirits are low, the nerves are loosened, the whole frame, of nature is enfeebled, and the body emaciated; this is often the case through outward troubles^{f438}: physicians say^{f439} that grief weakens

the strength, and destroys the spirits, more than labour does. “The sorrow of the world worketh death”, (^{<4070>}2 Corinthians 7:10); and sometimes, through spiritual troubles, a sense of sin and guilt of it, a legal sorrow, which produces a legal contrition of spirit; and such “a wounded spirit who can bear?” (^{<3884>}Proverbs 18:14). This is the effect of a mere work of the law upon the conscience; and stands opposed to the spiritual joy, and the effects of it, the Gospel brings.

Ver. 14. *The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge,* etc.] He that has in his heart an understanding of divine and spiritual things, of the Gospel and of the truths of it, will seek earnestly and diligently in the use of proper means after more knowledge; as he will desire to know more of Christ, his person, offices, and grace, he will follow on to know him, and not be content with the present degree of knowledge he has attained unto; he will hear and read the word, and pray and meditate, in order to come to a more perfect knowledge of the son of God, and of those things which relate to his spiritual peace and eternal welfare;

but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness; on foolish talking and jesting; on foolish and unlearned questions; on foolish and false doctrines; on foolish and hurtful lusts; on wind and ashes, a deceived heart having turned them aside: they take pleasure and satisfaction in those things; feed their fancy with them and feast upon them, which shows what fools they are; and such all unregenerate men be.

Ver. 15. *All the days of the afflicted [are] evil,* etc.] And some are afflicted all their days, from their youth up; so that not only the days of old age are evil days, in which they have no pleasure, but even the days of their youth; all their days, as Jacob says, “few and evil have the days of the years of my life been”, (^{<0470>}Genesis 47:9); because they had been filled up with affliction and trouble of one sort or another. Or, “all the days of the poor”^{f440}; either in purse, who want many of the good things of life; or in knowledge, as Gersom and Aben Ezra observe;

but he that is of a merry heart [hath] a continual feast; a heart that has “the kingdom of God” in it, which lies “not [in] meat and drink, but [in] righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”, (^{<5147>}Romans 14:17): which has the love of God shed abroad in it by the Spirit, where Christ dwells by faith; and that lives by faith on him, and on the provisions of his grace; all this is a constant continual feast to a gracious soul, made joyful hereby.

Ver. 16. *Better [is] little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.*] Not that a “little” is better than “much” of that which is good, as the things of this world are in themselves; poverty is not better than riches, simply considered; but as these are attended with different circumstances: if a man has but little of worldly substance, yet if he has “the fear of God” in his heart, and before his eyes; that fear which has God for its author and for its object, and which is itself a treasure; and may be here put for all grace, for the riches of grace saints are partakers of; such a man’s little is better than another man’s abundance without the fear of the Lord, as the Septuagint and Arabic versions render it: for such a man, though he has but little, which is the common portion of good men, yet he does not lack; he has enough, and is content; what he has he has with a blessing, and he enjoys it, and God in it, and has communion with him; and has also other bread to eat, the world knows nothing of: and particularly having the fear of God, the eye of God is upon him with pleasure; his heart is towards him, and sympathizes with him in all his troubles; his hand communicates unto him both temporal and spiritual meat, which is given to them that fear the Lord; his angels encamp about him, his power protects him; his secrets are with him, and inconceivable and inexpressible goodness is laid up for him: wherefore he is better off with his little, having the fear of God, than another with his great abundance and affluence, being destitute of it: and besides, having a great deal of “trouble” along with his treasure; trouble in amassing and getting it together; trouble in keeping it from being lost, or taken away by thieves and, robbers, for fear of which he cannot sleep; trouble through an insatiable desire of having more; he has no rest nor peace because he has not so much as he would have, or others have. Besides, he has what he has with curse; God sends upon him cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all he sets his hand to, (^{<630D>}Deuteronomy 28:2); where the same word is used as here: and he has it also with the cry of the poor; so some render the word, “a noise” or “tumult”,^{f441}; and interpret it of the cries and tears of those that are oppressed and injured; so Jarchi and Gersom; or, “with terror”,^{f442}, as some render it; with the terrors of a guilty conscience, with the fear of hell and everlasting damnation. Better have a little with a good conscience, than ever so much attended with such circumstances; it is not any man’s little, but the good man’s little, that is preferable to the wicked man’s much; (see ^{<4376>}Psalm 37:16).

Ver. 17. *Better [is] a dinner of herbs, where love is, etc.*] What Plautus^{f443} calls “asperam et terrestrem caenam”, “a harsh and earthly supper”, made

of what grows out of the earth; which is got without much cost or care, and dressed with little trouble; a traveller's dinner, as the word^{f444} signifies, and a poor one too to travel upon, such as is easily obtained, and presently cooked, and comes cheap. Now, where there are love and good nature in the host that prepares this dinner; or in a family that partakes of such an one, having no better; or among guests invited, who eat friendly together; or in the person that invites them, who receives them cheerfully, and heartily bids them welcome: such a dinner, with such circumstances, is better

than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith; than an ox kept up in the stall for fattening; or than a fatted one, which with the ancients was the principal in a grand entertainment; hence the allusion in (^{<424>}Matthew 22:4) (^{<2152>}Luke 15:23). In the times of Homer, an ox was in high esteem at their festivals; at the feasts made by his heroes, Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Ajax, an ox was a principal part of them, if not the whole; the back of a fat ox, or a sirloin of beef, was a favourite dish^{f445}. Indeed in some ages, both among Greeks and Romans, an ox was abstained from, through a superstitious regard to it, because so useful a creature in ploughing of the land; and it was carried so far as to suppose it to be as sinful to slay an ox as to kill a man^{f446}: and Aratus^{f447} represents it as not done, neither in the golden nor silver age, but that in the brasen age men first began to kill and eat oxen; but this is to be confuted by the laws of God, (^{<003>}Genesis 9:3 ^{<514>}Deuteronomy 14:4); and by the examples of Abraham and others. Now if there is hatred, either in the host, or in the guests among themselves, or in a family, it must stir up strifes and contentions, and render all enjoyments unpleasant and uncomfortable; (see ^{<370>}Proverbs 17:1 ^{<206>}Ecclesiastes 4:6); but where the love of God is, which is better than life, and the richest enjoyments of it; which sweetens every mercy, and cannot be purchased with money; and secures the best of blessings, the riches of grace and glory, and itself can never be lost; where this is, the meanest diet is preferable to the richest and most costly banquets of wicked men; who are hated and abhorred by the Lord, for their oppression and injustice, their luxury, or their covetousness; for poor men may be loved of God, and the rich be abhorred by him, (^{<910>}Psalms 10:4 ^{<2151>}Luke 15:19-23).

Ver. 18. *A wrathful man stirreth up strife*, etc.] A man of a wrathful disposition, of a furious spirit, of an angry temper; that is under the power and dominion of such a passion, and indulges it, and takes all opportunities to gratify it; he stirs up strife and contention where there was none, or

where it was laid; as a man stirs up coals of fire and raises a flame; (see ^{<AB21>}Proverbs 26:21). He stirs up strife in families, sets one relation against another, and the house in an uproar; he stirs up contentions in neighbourhoods, and sets one friend and neighbour against another, whence proceed quarrels and lawsuits: he stirs up strife in churches, breaks brotherly love, and causes animosities and divisions; he stirs up strife in kingdoms and states, whence come wars and fightings, confusion, and every evil work;

but [he that is] slow to anger appeaseth strife: a man of a quiet and peaceable disposition, possessed of the true grace of charity; who is not easily provoked, longsuffering, bears and endures all things; he allays the heat of anger; he quenches the coals of contention; he calms the storm and makes it quiet, as the word ^{f448} signifies; he

“mitigates strifes raised,”

as the Vulgate Latin version renders it; he composes differences, reconciles the parties at variance, and makes all hush and still; and so prevents the ill consequences of contention and strife.

Ver. 19. *The way of the slothful [man is] as an hedge of thorns,* etc.] Or, “strewed with thorns”, as the Septuagint and Arabic versions; the Targum is,

“the ways of the slothful are briars and thorns.”

Either really being made so by his own conduct; who, by his slothfulness, has implicated and entangled himself in such difficulties, that he cannot extricate himself; his way is not passable, at least not very easily; it is as it were hedged up with thorns; (see ^{<AB6>}Hosea 2:6); or in his own apprehensions; who raises such difficulties about doing business, which to him seem insurmountable; at least which discourage him from attempting it, it being like breaking through thorns and briars; hence he will not plough because of the cold, nor go abroad because there is a lion in the streets, (^{<AB10>}Proverbs 20:4 22:13 26:13); or the way of his duty, especially of virtue and religion, is as troublesome and disagreeable to him as breaking through a thorn hedge, or treading upon briars and thorns; to attend the duties of public worship, prayer, and hearing the word, is very irksome to him; to be present at family worship, at prayer, and hearing the Scriptures or religious discourses read, is like sitting upon thorns unto him. This, as Aben Ezra

observes, is to be understood of a wicked man, as the opposition in the next clause shows;

but the way of the righteous [is] made plain: it is a castup way, as the word^{f449} signifies; a causeway, a highway, and a plain one, in which a truly righteous and good man finds no difficulty; yea, it is so plain, that men, though fools in other respects, shall not err therein, (^{<2808>}Isaiah 35:8); nor is it grievous and troublesome, but, on the contrary, very delightful, as the ways of Christ and wisdom are; his commandments are not grievous, his yoke is easy, and his paths pleasant; and the righteous man walks at liberty and with pleasure in them; and without offence or stumbling, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it.

Ver. 20. *A wise son maketh a glad father*, etc.] (See Gill on "^{<2008>}Proverbs 10:1");

but a foolish man despiseth his mother; that bore him and brought him up, and perhaps was too indulgent to him; which aggravates his sin and her sorrow; (see Gill on "^{<2008>}Proverbs 10:1"); or causes her to be despised by others, as Jarchi interprets it; such a man's sin, which is great folly, and shows him to be a foolish man, is highly resented by the Lord, and will be severely punished; (see ^{<2807>}Proverbs 30:17). The Targum is,

“a foolish son despises his mother;”

and so the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, which makes the antithesis more clear; and the Hebrew text designs one grown up to man's estate.

Ver. 21. *Folly [is] joy to [him that is] destitute of wisdom*, etc.] Or “that wants a heart”^{f450}, a wise and understanding one; by “folly” is meant sin, for all sin is folly; and that is very pleasing and joyous to a wicked he chooses it and delights in it; instead of being ashamed of it, and sorry for it, he glories in it, and makes his boast of it; and not only takes pleasure in committing it himself, but also in those that do it; (see ^{<2023>}Proverbs 10:23);

but a man of understanding walketh uprightly; he who has his understanding enlightened by the Spirit of God; who has an understanding given him by the Son of God; who has a spiritual and experimental understanding of the Gospel, and the truths of it: he walks according to the rule of the divine word; he walks as he has Christ for an example, and by faith on him; and after the spirit, and not after the flesh: or “directs himself

in walking”^{f451}, his goings, as the Vulgate Latin version, according to the above rule, example, and guidance, by the assistance of the spirit and grace of God; otherwise it is not in man that walketh of himself to direct his steps, (²⁴⁰²³Jeremiah 10:23).

Ver. 22. *Without counsel purposes are disappointed*, etc.] If a man determines and resolves upon a matter, and at once hastily and precipitately goes about it, without mature deliberation, without consulting with himself, and taking the advice of others in forming a scheme to bring about his designs, it generally comes to nothing; see (²⁴¹⁴⁸Luke 14:28-32); or “without a secret”^{f452} without keeping one; if a man divulges his intentions, it is much if they are not frustrated; so the Targum,

“vain are the thoughts (or designs) where there is no secret;”

if a man makes no secret of what he designs to do, he is easily counterworked, and his purposes disappointed;

but in the multitude of counsellors they are established; his purposes are, as in (²⁴⁰⁰⁸Proverbs 20:18); having the advice of others, and these many, he is confirmed that he is right in what he has thought of and purposed to do; and therefore goes about it with the greater spirit and cheerfulness, and is most likely to succeed, and generally does; see (²⁴⁰¹⁴Proverbs 11:14).

Ver. 23. *A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth*, etc.] When his advice is asked, and he gives good and wholesome counsel, and that being taken succeeds; it is a pleasure to a man that he is capable of assisting his friend, and doing him service, or a common good, whether it be in things natural, civil, or religious; when his speech is with salt, seasoned with grace, and he knows how he ought to answer every man; when that which is good proceeds from him, and is to the use of edifying, and ministers grace to the hearers, and is acceptable to them; when with readiness he gives an answer to every man that asks him a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear, (⁵⁰⁰⁶Colossians 3:6) (⁴⁰⁰⁹Ephesians 4:29 ⁴⁰¹⁵1 Peter 3:15);

and a word [spoken] in due season, how good [is it]? whether by way of advice and counsel to such who stand in need of it, or of exhortation and instruction to those that want it, or of comfort to those that are distressed; such is a word of promise spoken and applied by the Spirit of God to the hearts of his people in a time of need; and such is the Gospel of peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation, as spoken by Christ and his ministers

to weary and wounded souls; it cannot be well and fully expressed how sweet, how good, how suitable, as well as seasonable, it is: (see ~~<1051>~~ Proverbs 25:11 ~~<2804>~~ Isaiah 50:4).

Ver. 24. *The way of life [is] above to the wise*, etc.] Of “the way of life”; (see Gill on “~~<2007>~~ Proverbs 10:17”); this is said to be “above”, or it tends “to [what is] above”; it leads to heaven and happiness above; the life itself it is the way of or to is above, it is hid with Christ in God; eternal life, glory, and happiness, is above; it is a house eternal in the heavens, an inheritance reserved there, and will be there enjoyed by the saints: the way to it is above; Christ is the way, and he is in heaven, at the Father’s right hand, through whom only men can come at this life; wherefore those who are in the way of it have their thoughts, their hearts, their affections and conversations, above, (~~<4162>~~ Matthew 6:21 ~~<5106>~~ Colossians 3:1,2 ~~<5109>~~ Philippians 3:20). Faith, which deals with Christ the way, and by which men walk in him, is signified by soaring aloft, mounting up with wings as eagles, by entering within the veil, and dwelling on high, and by looking upwards, and at things unseen, and being the evidence of them. The Vulgate Latin version renders it, “the way of life is above the learned man”, or wise man; the man that has no other than natural learning and wisdom, this way of life and salvation by Christ lies out of his knowledge; it is what the most sagacious and penetrating man could never discover; it is hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes; or this is only known to such who are truly wise unto salvation; it is plain to them, and they highly esteem it, and choose to walk in it; it is an “ascent to him that understands”, as the Syriac version renders it; it is a going up hill, it is an ascending upwards and heavenwards; such a man is continually looking upwards unto Christ, the author and finisher of his faith; pressing towards him, the mark for the prize; keeping his eye, not on things on earth, things temporal, which are seen here below, but on things above, things unseen, which are eternal in the heavens;

that he may depart from hell beneath; not from the grave, as “sheol” sometimes signifies: for wise men die as well as fools, and come to the grave, which is the house appointed for all living; even those who are in the way of life that is above do not escape death and the grave: but such are secured from everlasting ruin and destruction, from being destroyed soul and body in hell; they steer quite a different course and road from that; every step they take upwards carries them so far off from hell; which is the contrary way; the broad road of sin is the lower way, or what leads to hell

and destruction beneath; the narrow way of faith in Christ is the upper way, and that leads to eternal life above.

Ver. 25. *The Lord will destroy the house of the proud*, etc.] To whom he has the utmost aversion; he sets himself against them and resists them, and will not only destroy them, but their stately houses too, which their have fancied shall continue for ever; and also their families, their children and posterity; these shall be as stubble, and shall be burnt up in his wrath, and neither root nor branch left. Moreover, the man of sin, the son of perdition, may be more especially intended, that exalts himself above all that is called God, with all the sons of pride supported by him; his house, which is the house of the foolish and adulterous woman, the idolatrous church of Rome, shall be rooted up; the city of Rome, the seat of the beast itself, where his house or palace is, shall be destroyed, and all that belong unto him, even all they that have destroyed the earth, (^{611B} Revelation 11:18);

but he will establish the border of the widow; whose advocate, judge, and defender he is; when men, rich, proud, and oppressive, attempt to remove the landmark of the widow's border, and so lessen her land and enlarge their own, God will not suffer it to be done, but will establish it in its place; that is, such who are weak and helpless, as widows are, and cannot defend themselves and their property, he will protect them and secure it for them. So the church of Christ, during the reign of antichrist, being obliged to flee into the wilderness, looks like a widow deprived of her husband, and has but "little strength" to support and defend herself, as is said of the church of Philadelphia, (^{611B} Revelation 3:8); yet the Lord will secure and preserve her, and firmly settle and establish her, yea, enlarge her borders, and make them of pleasant stones; spread the kingdom of Christ from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Frequent mention is made of the establishing of the church in the latter day, (^{611B} Psalm 48:8 87:5) (^{611B} Isaiah 2:2).

Ver. 26. *The thoughts of the wicked [are] an abomination to the Lord*, etc.] They are known unto the Lord, who is the searcher of the heart, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of it; he knows they are vain and sinful, yea, that they are only evil, and that continually, and therefore are hateful and abominable to him; it may be rendered "the thoughts of evil", as by the Targum; or evil thoughts, as the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and the Oriental versions; but Aben Ezra interprets as we, the thoughts of a wicked man, which are never otherwise but evil; whereas in a good man,

though there are many evil thoughts which are abominable to himself, yet there are some good thoughts, and which are pleasing to the Lord, as follows;

but [the words] of the pure [are] pleasant words; that is, unto the Lord; which are the same with their thoughts, and are the effect of them, and so stand opposed to the thoughts of the wicked; these, expressed either in a way of prayer or of praise, are sweet and pleasant, and acceptable unto God through Christ; as likewise their words and discourse in religious conversation, which also minister grace unto the hearer, and are very delightful and pleasing to saints; the words may be supplied thus, “but [the thoughts] of the pure”, of such who are pure in heart, whose hearts are purified by faith in the blood of Christ, are “words of pleasantness”, so Gersom; there is a language in thought which is known to a man’s self, and by the Lord; there is the meditation or discourse of the heart, and this being about divine and spiritual things is pleasing to God; he hearkens to it, and writes a book of remembrance for them that fear him, and have thought on his name; (see ^{<1914>}Psalm 19:14 ^{<3116>}Malachi 3:16).

Ver. 27. *He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house*, etc.] Or “that covets a covetousness”,^{f453} an evil one, as in (^{<3111>}Habakkuk 2:9); that seeks riches by unlawful means, that gathers the mammon of falsehood, or unrighteousness, as the Targum; he entails a curse and brings ruin and destruction upon his family; the Septuagint and Arabic versions are, he “destroys himself”; or “his own soul”, as the Syriac version; it may be understood of a man that is over anxious and eager to be rich, and hurries on business, and gives his servants no proper time for food and rest; (see Gill on “^{<3112>}Proverbs 11:29”);

but he that hateth gifts shall live; that rejects them with abhorrence, when offered to bribe him to pervert judgment, or to do an unjust thing; otherwise gifts may be lawfully received from one friend by another; the sin is when they are given and taken for the sake of doing what is base and sinful; and a man that shakes his hand from receiving gifts on such a basis, he and his family shall prosper and increase in worldly things; and, doing this from a right principle of grace, shall live comfortably in a spiritual sense, and thrive and flourish in his soul, and live an eternal life hereafter; (see ^{<1915>}Psalm 16:5,6).

Ver. 28. *The heart of the righteous studieth to answer*, etc.] He thinks before he speaks, meditates what he shall say, what answer to give to men;

whether in things civil, natural, or religious; and what to return to the Lord when he is reproved by him; or what to say in prayer to him, or by way of thankfulness for mercies received from him; see (^{<2186>}Proverbs 3:6 ^{<3111>}Habakkuk 2:1); though our Lord advises his disciples, when summoned before their persecutors, not to meditate beforehand what they should answer, since they should have immediate assistance, (^{<2214>}Luke 21:14); but this was in extraordinary cases; in common ones the observation of the wise man should be attended to. A Jewish^{f454} writer renders the words, “the heart of the righteous meditates wormwood”, or bitter things; see (^{<2184>}Proverbs 5:4); as the judgment of God, death, and hell; this sense is mentioned by Aben Ezra, but rejected;

but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things; without any previous thought and consideration, without fear or wit; in great abundance, as water out of a fountain; thus an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things readily and at once, having no concern about the consequences of things, (^{<4125>}Matthew 12:25); (see Gill on “^{<2152>}Proverbs 15:2”).

Ver. 29. *The Lord [is] far from the wicked*, etc.] Not as to his essence or powerful presence, which is everywhere, for he is God omnipresent; but with respect to his favour and good will, he is far from helping in distress, and from hearing their cries when they apply unto him in desperate circumstances; nor does he admit them to nearness and communion with him now, as he does the righteous; nor will he receive them to himself at the last day, but bid them depart from him; they are far from him and from his law, and from all righteousness; and he is far from them, and keeps them at a distance from him;

but he heareth the prayer of the righteous; they draw nigh to him, and he draws nigh to them; he is nigh to all that call upon him in truth; and there is none like them that has God so nigh them as they have; his eyes are upon them, and his ears are open to their cries; he is a God hearing and answering their prayers, and bestows upon them the favours they ask for, and stand in need of.

Ver. 30. *The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart*, etc.] Not so much the visive power, the faculty of seeing, a strong and clear eyesight; though this is a great mercy, and from the Lord, and to be prized, and does give joy of heart; but rather the objects seen by the light of the eyes, as Jarchi; as green gardens, flowing rivers, pleasant meadows, rising hills, lowly vales, herbs,

plants, trees, birds, beasts, and creatures of every kind; nor is the eye ever satisfied with seeing; especially light itself beheld rejoiceth the heart, and particularly that grand luminary and fountain of light, the sun. “Light is sweet”, says the wise man, (²¹¹⁰⁷Ecclesiastes 11:7), “and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun”, which is a proper comment on this text: and much more pleasant and delightful, cheering and rejoicing, must be the spiritual light of the eyes of the understanding, when opened by the Spirit of God at conversion; it is marvellous light souls are then called into, and wonderful things do they then behold, which rejoice their hearts; as Christ the sun of righteousness himself, the light of the world, the glories of his person and office, the fulness of grace that is in him, pardon of sin by his blood, justification by his righteousness, and free and full salvation through him for the worst and chief of sinners: in the light which is thrown into them they see light; the light of God’s countenance, his face and favour, which put gladness into them; the light of the divine word, and the precious truths of it; yea, the light, joy, and happiness of the world to come, in the hope of which their hearts rejoice. Jarchi mystically interprets this of the light of the eyes in the law; but it is much better to understand it of the light of the eyes in the Gospel, and the mysteries of it;

[and] a good report maketh the bones fat; or “a good hearing”^{f455}; not the sense of hearing, or a quick exercise of that, though a very great blessing; but things heard. Some understand this of a good or “fame”^{f456}, which is sometimes the sense of the phrase; either a good report which a man hears of himself, which makes his spirit cheerful; and this affects his body and the juices of it, which fill his bones with marrow, and cover them with fatness; or which he hears of his friends, and is pleasing to him, as it was to the Apostle John that Demetrius had a good report of all men, (⁶⁰¹²3 John 1:12). But rather this is to be understood of the good news, or good hearing, from a far country, as the same phrase is rendered in (²¹²⁵Proverbs 25:25); and here in the Arabic version is so translated, even the Gospel, which is a report; see (²⁵⁰¹Isaiah 53:1 ⁵¹⁰⁶Romans 10:16); a report concerning God, the perfections of his nature, the purposes of his heart, the covenant of his grace, his love, grace, and mercy towards men in Christ Jesus; a “report” concerning Christ, concerning his person and offices, concerning his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death; concerning his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of God, intercession for his people, and second coming to judgment; and concerning salvation, peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life by him; a report concerning the

good land, the heavenly Canaan, and the glories of it, the way unto it, and the persons that shall possess it: and this is a “good” report; it is good tidings of good things, a report of good things laid up in covenant, which are come by Christ the great High Priest, which saints are interested in, and shall partake of here and hereafter; it is a true report, and to be believed, since it is made by God himself, by Jesus Christ the faithful witness, and by the apostles of Christ, who were eye and ear witnesses of the things they reported; and such a report being heard, received, and embraced, greatly contributes to the spiritual health and prosperity of the children of God, it makes them fat and flourishing; such pleasant words are as the honeycomb, sweet to the soul, make glad the heart, and are marrow and health to the bones; (see ⁴¹⁸⁸Proverbs 3:8 12:25 16:24).

Ver. 31. *The ear that heareth the reproof of life*, etc.] That is given according to the word of life, in a warm, fervent, and lively manner, with zeal, and in good earnest; which reproves the life of another by his own, as well as by words; and which tends to the spiritual and eternal life of the person reprov'd; being taken, a man that diligently hearkens to, kindly and cordially receives, and cheerfully obeys such reproof given him,

abideth among the wise; he not only chooseth to be among them, that he may have the advantage of their wise counsels and reproofs, but he becomes wise himself thereby, and attains to the character of a wise man, and is numbered among them; such a man abides in the house of wisdom, the church of God, and attends upon and has conversation with the wise dispensers of the word, and shall have a part with them in the church above, in the kingdom of heaven, where the wise will shine as the firmament; the word here used does not denote a lodging for a night, as it sometimes signifies, but a perpetual abiding.

Ver. 32. *He that refuseth instruction*, etc.] The instruction of parents, masters, ministers, and of God himself; or “correction”^{f457}, instruction either by the word or by the rod; he that withdraws himself from it, will not be in the way of it, that shuns, neglects, and despises it, or carelessly and contemptuously attends it:

despiseth his own soul; shows that he makes no account of it, has no regard for it or care about it, when it is so precious a jewel, and the loss of it irreparable; not that a man can strictly and properly despise his soul, but comparatively, having a greater regard for his body, and especially for his

carnal lusts and pleasures, than for that; or as a man diseased and refuses proper medicines may be said to despise his health;

but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding; or “a heart”^{f458}; he gets understanding by listening to reproof, and behaving according to it; he better understands himself and his case, what he should shun and avoid, what he should receive, embrace, and do; instead of losing his soul, as the man that refuses correction does, he finds the life of it, and possesses it, and with it a large share of experience and spiritual wisdom.

Ver. 33. *The fear of the Lord [is] the instruction of wisdom*, etc.] It is “the beginning of wisdom”, (^{<2090>}Proverbs 9:10); it leads unto it, instructs a man in it; by means of it he attains to true spiritual and evangelical wisdom; it teaches him to abstain from sin, and to serve the Lord; and to seek the salvation of his soul in the way God has appointed, which is by his Son Jesus Christ, which to do is the highest wisdom;

and before honour [is] humility; the fear of God and humility go together, where the one is the other is; and as the one is the way to wisdom, the other is the way to glory; Christ’s humiliation was before his exaltation; men are first humbled and laid low in their own eyes, and then they are raised out of their low estate, and are set among princes; and shall inherit the throne of glory, being made kings and priests unto God; it is a frequent saying of Christ’s, “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”, (^{<2141>}Luke 14:11); such an one is raised to a high estate of grace, and at last to eternal glory.