

CHAPTER 16

Ver. 1. *The preparations of the heart in man*, etc.] The sense of these words, according to our version, depends upon the next clause, and the meaning of the whole is, that a man can neither think nor speak without God: the “orderings” or “marshallings of the heart”^{f459}, as it may be rendered; that is, of the thoughts of the heart, which are generally irregular and confused; the ranging them in order, as an army in battle array, or as things regularly placed on a well furnished table; the fixing them on any particular subject, though about things civil and natural, so as closely to attend to them, and proceed in a regular manner in the consideration of them, are not without the concurrence of divine Providence: and whereas the thoughts of men’s hearts are evil, and that continually, and nothing but evil thoughts naturally proceed from thence; the ordering and marshalling of them, and fixing them to the attention and consideration of divine and spiritual things, are not without the supernatural grace of God; for we cannot think a good thought of ourselves, nor indeed anything of ourselves in a spiritual manner, (~~408~~2 Corinthians 3:5); all preparations for religious service and duty, whether it be to pray unto God, or to preach in his name, are from the Lord; it is he that works in men both “to will and to do”; that gives them the willing mind, or a suitable frame for service, as well as ability to perform it; that pours out the Spirit of grace and supplication on them, and disposes and directs their minds to proper petitions, and furnishes his ministering servants in their studies with agreeable matter for their ministrations, (~~407~~Psalm 10:17 ~~408~~2 Corinthians 3:5,6);

and the answer of the tongue [is] from the Lord; who made man’s mouth, and teaches him what to say, both before God and man; what he shall say in prayer to him, or in preaching to others; for the “door of utterance” in either service is from him, as well as the preparation for it: most versions and interpreters make these clauses distinct, the one as belonging to men, the other to God; thus, “to men [belong] the preparations of the heart, but from the Lord is the answer” or “[speech] of the tongue”; the former is said by way of concession, and according to the opinion of men; and the sense may be, be it so, that man has the marshalling and ordering of his own thoughts, and that he can lay things together in his mind, and think pertinently and properly on a subject, and is capable of preparing matter for a discourse; yet it is as easy to observe, that men can better form ideas of

things in their minds, the they can express their sense and meaning; and though they may be ever so well prepared to speak, yet they are not able to do it, unless the Lord gives them utterance, and assists their memories; they lose what they had prepared, or deliver it in a disorderly and confused manner, and sometimes think to say one thing, and say another; their tongues are overruled by the Lord to say what they never intended, as in the cases of Balaam and Caiaphas. The Targum is,

“from man is the counsel of the heart, and from the Lord is the speech of the tongue.”

Ver. 2. *All the ways of a man [are] clean in his own eyes*, etc.] All right and well, not only some, but all, having a high opinion of himself; for this is to be understood of a self-righteous man, who is pure in his own eyes, though not cleansed from his filthiness, and so fancies every way he walks in, and everything he does, is pure; this is owing to want of knowledge of the impurity of his nature; was he sensible of this, he would see that his best righteousness is as filthy rags and to his ignorance of the spirituality of the law, which, was he acquainted with, he would find, on comparing himself with it, that he and all he did was polluted and unclean: some read the words, “all the ways of a pure man [are] before his eyes”: the eyes of the Lord, he sees them, and approves of them; so Aben Ezra; and to this agrees the Septuagint version, “all the works of an humble man [are] manifest with God”; and the Arabic version, “all the works of an humble man are clean before God”; but the former reading and sense seem best;

but the Lord weigheth the spirits; searches and tries the hearts; he sees, knows, and observes the principles of all actions, and can as exactly adjust the nature and quality of them, as a man, with a pair of scales in his hands, can tell precisely the weight of anything put into them; the Lord weighs the spirits, or hearts, from whence all actions flow, by his omniscience, and accordingly judges of them by that, and not by the outward appearance; and he weighs all actions by his law, in the balance of the sanctuary, where they are found wanting, and come greatly short of that purity and perfection pharisaical persons imagine there is in them.

Ver. 3. *Commit thy works unto the Lord*, etc.] Natural, civil, or religious; seek to him for strength and assistance in all, and leave the success of all with him: or “roll thy works on” or “unto the Lord”^{f460}; devolve all upon him, cast all care upon him and his providence for supply, support, and sustenance in life; and commit the business of the salvation of thy soul, and

the important affairs of it, wholly to him, who is able, willing, and faithful, to keep what is committed to him; and, having so done, may sit down easy and satisfied, as one that is rid of a burden by casting it on another, better able to bear it, or more equal to the work committed to him: the Targum is, “reveal thy works to God”; and so the Syriac and Vulgate Latin versions, “reveal thy works to the Lord”; thy case, condition, and circumstances; thy wants and necessities; seek and ask for a supply of him, make known thy requests to him; for though he is not ignorant of the affairs of his people, yet he will be sought unto to do the things for them he intends to do, and they stand in need of;

and thy thoughts shall be established; when a man has, by faith and in prayer, committed himself, his case, his ways and works, to the Lord, his mind is made easy, his thoughts are composed and settled, and he quietly waits the issues of things; he says, the will of the Lord be done; he knows that he causes all things to work together for good; and whatever is for his good and God’s glory shall be brought to pass; and this makes him calm, sedate, and easy; and he is in a fair way of having his designs, desires, and endeavours accomplished; (see ¹⁸⁷⁶Psalm 37:5).

Ver. 4. *The Lord hath made all [things] for himself*, etc.] This is true of the Lord with respect to the creation of all things by him. All things are made by him, the heaven, earth, and sea; and all that are in them, angels, men, beasts, birds, fishes, and all creatures: and these are made for himself, and not another; not for the pure or good men, as Aben Ezra, though all things are for the elect’s sake; but for God himself, besides whom there was no other before the creation, nor is there any other God but him, who is the first cause and last end of all things: nor were those all things made for him, through any want he had of them, being God all sufficient and blessed for evermore, but to show his greatness, and communicate his goodness; they are made for his service, which all creatures are obliged unto, and whom all in their way obey, and for his honour and glory. It is also true of his works of providence, and of his ordering and disposing of all things in the course of that, to answer ends of his own glory; his kingdom of providence rules over all; there is a general providence, which respects all creatures and things; and there is a particular providence attending the Lord’s own people; and in all the glory of his wisdom, justice, truth, and goodness, is conspicuous: but this is chiefly, if not solely, to be understood of God’s decrees and purposes; and of his ordering and appointing all things to bring about his own glory. Every thing is appointed

of God; he has foreordained whatever comes to pass; there is a purpose for everything under the heavens, and a time fixed for the execution of it. Junius restrains it to “all men”; but it is true of all creatures and things, though especially men: all things are appointed by the Lord, respecting the temporal estate of men; their birth, and the time of it, with all the circumstances attending it; the place of their abode, their calling, station of life, and usefulness; all adverse and prosperous dispensations; their death, with all the events leading to it: and so likewise all things respecting their spiritual and eternal estate; the choice of them to salvation; their redemption by Christ; the time of his coming, sufferings, and death, and the circumstances thereof; the conversion of God’s elect, the time, place, and means; these are all according to the purpose of God; as are also all their times of affliction, temptation, desertion, and of joy and comfort. In a word, the final state of all men, good and bad, is fixed by the Lord; and all this is “for himself”, which some render, “to answer to himself”^{f461}; all creatures are made to answer to his original design in making them, to the laws of their creation, and to answer his ends and purposes; and which is ultimately his own glory: or for his praise, as Jarchi; for his will and pleasure, as R. Isaac; for the thing in which he is well pleased, as R. Jonah or for his own sake, as Kimchi; and all which agree, as with the sense of the words, so with (☩) Revelation 4:11). The Targum and Syriac version very wrongly render them,

“all the works of God, or the Lord, are for them that obey him;”

yea, even the wicked for the day of evil; this is added to illustrate the general proposition in the preceding clause, and to obviate an objection, that might be taken from the destruction of the wicked, against all things being for the glory of God; for even the destruction of the wicked, which is under a divine appointment, is for his glory. It is not the sense of this text, nor of any other passage of Scripture, that God made man to damn him; nor is this to be inferred from the doctrine of predestination: God made man, neither to damn him, nor to save him, but for his own glory; and that is secured, whether in his salvation or damnation; nor did or does God make men wicked; he made man upright, and he has made himself wicked; and, being so, God may justly appoint him to damnation for his wickedness, in doing which he glorifies his justice. “The day of evil”, or “evil day”, is the day of wrath and ruin, unto which wicked men are reserved by the appointment of God, agreeably to the Targum, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions. This is true of wicked angels, wicked men, and

particularly of that wicked one, the man of sin and son of perdition, antichrist; the word here used is in the singular number.

Ver. 5. *Every one [that is] proud in heart [is] an abomination to the Lord*, etc.] Though he may dissemble his pride, and not discover it in his looks, by his words and gestures; yet the Lord sees and knows the heart, the naughtiness of it, and the pride that is in it: and only a proud look, but a proud heart, is abominable to him: everyone that is so arrogant as to arraign the decrees of God, and quarrel with him about them, to whom the apostle says, “Nay, but, O man”, O proud vain man, “who art thou, that repliest against God?” (^{<B9D>}Romans 9:19-21); every proud Pharisee, that trusts in himself that he is righteous, and despises others, that justifies himself before men, is an abomination in the sight of God, (^{<E8D>}Luke 18:9 16:15); particularly antichrist, who has not only a proud look, a look more stout than his fellows, but a proud heart; exalts himself above all that is called God; and not only speaks big words against the most High, but has it in his heart to change times and laws; and proudly imagines he shall always continue in his grandeur and prosperity, (^{<A7D>}Daniel 7:25 ^{<A0D>}2 Thessalonians 2:4 ^{<B8D>}Revelation 18:7);

[though] hand [join] in hand, he shall not be unpunished; though he endeavours with both hands, with all his might and main, to secure himself and prevent his ruin, he shall not be able to do it; though he enters into confederacy with, and calls in the kings of the earth to his assistance, it will be of no avail, both he and they shall be destroyed; or out of hand, immediately, his destruction will come upon him, (^{<A6D>}Revelation 16:14,16 18:8 19:19-21); (see Gill on “^{<A1D>}Proverbs 11:21”); The Targum is,

“from evil he shall not be cleared;”

and the Syriac version,

“he that stretcheth out his hand against his neighbour shall not be cleared from evil.”

Ver. 6. *By mercy and truth iniquity is purged*, etc.] Or “expiated”^{f462}, and atoned for: not by the mercy and truth of men; not by alms deeds or showing mercy to the poor; nor by speaking truth and keeping promises, and doing justice between man and man; for, though these are duties to be performed, they will not atone for sin; and may be done by persons destitute of the grace of God, and whose iniquities are not purged or pardoned: but by the mercy and truth of God; through his “mercy”, in

sending Christ to be the propitiation for sin; and through his “truth”, in fulfilling his promises concerning Christ; and particularly concerning pardon on the foot of his sacrifice and satisfaction, where mercy and truth have met together: or through the grace and truth come by Jesus Christ; or through his atoning sacrifice, by which he has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity; in which there is a rich display of his own and of his father’s grace and mercy, truth and faithfulness;

and by the fear of the Lord [men] depart from evil; having that put into their hearts, and excited and influenced by the grace and goodness of God, men are engaged to abstain from evil, and the appearance of it; it teaches them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and godly in this world.

Ver. 7. *When a man’s ways please the Lord*, etc.] As they do when a man walks according to the rule of his word; when he walks as he has Christ for an example; when he walks after the Spirit, and not after the flesh; when he walks by faith, and does all he does in faith; without which it is impossible to please God, (³¹⁰⁶Hebrews 11:6); and when all his ways and actions are directed to the glory of God;

he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him; as Abimelech with Isaac, Esau with Jacob; and the enemies of the church and people of God with them, in the latter day, (⁴⁰³⁹Revelation 3:9).

Ver. 8. *Better [is] a little with righteousness*, etc.] Gotten in a righteous way, held by a righteous claim, used in a righteous manner, attended with a life of righteousness and holiness; and also along with an interest in the righteousness of Christ, which renders acceptable unto God, yields peace and comfort, and entitles to eternal glory and happiness. A truly righteous man may have but little of this world’s goods; but his small pittance is better

than great revenues without right; obtained in an unjust way; detained from the right owner of them, and used in an unrighteous manner, in a course of sin and wickedness: or, “without judgment”^{f463}; how to make use of them aright, and without a righteousness that will justify them at the day of judgment; (see Gill on “²¹⁵⁶Proverbs 15:16”). A little the true church of Christ enjoys in the wilderness; having Christ and his grace, Christ and his righteousness, is better than all the revenues of the church of Rome gotten

by the unlawful methods they are; and which, in one hour will come to nought, (^{f6817}Revelation 18:17).

Ver. 9. *A man's heart deviseth his way*, etc.] This is to be understood, not of a wicked man, in whose heart is frowardness, and who devises mischief and evil imaginations continually, (²¹⁶⁴⁸Proverbs 6:14,18); for such are an abomination to the Lord; nor will he direct their goings, or prosper and succeed them in their ways: but of a good man, or righteous man, as Aben Ezra; who thinks of the way in which he should go, and desires to walk in a right way, as Jarchi; and who is influenced by the Spirit and grace of God to think and act in this manner; for otherwise the way of man is not in himself; it is not of his own devising and finding out; nor is his disposition to walk in it of himself; and it is only such a man, a good man, whose steps are ordered by the Lord, as follows; see (²⁴¹¹³Jeremiah 10:23 ⁴⁸⁷²³Psalms 37:23);

but the Lord directeth his steps: to go right on, and not turn to the right hand or the left; and to walk safely and surely, through a variety of troubles and difficulties, to his kingdom and glory.

Ver. 10. *A divine sentence [is] in the lips of the king*, etc.] Or “divination”^{f464}, as the word signifies; or what is like to divination, as Aben Ezra and Gersom interpret it^{f465}. What he says is as an oracle, and should be strictly true. Some understand it of the sagacity and penetration of kings, as was in Solomon, and appeared in his judging the two harlots; but such is not to be found in kings in common: rather therefore this expresses and designs what should be, and not what is, in kings. These, as the kings of Israel, ought to have the book of God before them, and read in it, and judge and pronounce sentence in every case according to it; they should speak as the oracles of God; and, when they do, a divine sentence may be said to be in their lips. But it is best to understand this of the King of kings, of the King Messiah; into whose lips grace is poured, and from whence none but words of wisdom, grace, and truth, flow; who taught the way of God in truth; who had the word of God in his heart and in his month continually; and on whom the Spirit of wisdom without measure dwelt; and is the wisdom and word of God, as well as the power of God;

his mouth transgresseth not in judgment; this cannot be said of any earthly king; they ought not indeed to transgress in judgment with their mouths, but it is notorious that they too often do: could this be applied to kings in common, they would have a better claim to infallibility than the pope of

Rome has. But this is true of Christ, the King of saints; who is a King that reigns in righteousness, and decrees judgment; sits upon his throne, to order and establish it with judgment: nor does his mouth ever transgress in judgment, or ever say, or he do, a wrong thing; his sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness.

Ver. 11. *A just weight and balance [are] the Lord's*, etc.] These are of his devising; what he has put into the heart, of men to contrive and make use of, for the benefit of mankind, for the keeping and maintaining truth and justice in commercial affairs; these are of his appointing, commanding, and approving, (^{<B985>}Leviticus 19:35,36);

all the weights of the bag [are] his work; or, “all the stones”^{f466}; greater or smaller, which were formerly used in weighing, and were kept in a bag for that purpose; these are by the Lord's appointment and order. This may be applied to the Scriptures of truth, which are of God; are the balance of the sanctuary, in which every doctrine is to be weighed and tried; what agrees with them is to be received, and what is found wanting is to be rejected. The Targum is,

“his works, all of them, are weights of truth.”

Ver. 12. *[It is] an abomination to kings to commit wickedness*, etc.] The Targum is,

“the abomination of kings are they that work wickedness.”

It should be an abomination to kings to commit wickedness themselves, and those that do it should be abhorred by them, or they should show their resentment at it by removing them from their presence, or by punishing them: and though there have been such kings as David, (^{<B910>}Psalm 101:4,7); yet there are but few such; this is not true of kings in common; and therefore rather expresses what they should be than what they are; but is perfectly applicable to Christ, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, (^{<B907>}Psalm 45:7);

for the throne is established by righteousness; this is the support, strength, and security of every kingdom, and of the thrones of kings; and it is with judgment and righteousness that the throne of Christ is established; yea, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, (^{<B907>}Isaiah 9:7 ^{<B914>}Psalm 89:14).

Ver. 13. *Righteous lips [are] the delight of kings*, etc.] Such that speak truth and righteousness, and advise to the administration of justice and judgment, and to do that which is most for their own true honour and the people's good, are, or ought to be, highly valued and esteemed by kings: but the contrary is too often the case; kings hearken to those that speak lies, that flatter them, and gratify their pride, ambition, and love of power, to the hurt of their subjects;

and they love him that speaketh right: agreeably to right reason; which makes for the honour of kings, and the good of those over whom they rule. Christ loves and delights in those that deliver out his doctrines in the taught words of the Holy Ghost, without any mixture or corruption; that explain, inculcate, and enforce his laws and commands; and faithfully declare the whole counsel of God, both with respect to faith and practice; all which is for his glory, as King of saints, and to the profit and advantage of those who submit to the sceptre of his kingdom.

Ver. 14. *The wrath of a king [is as] messengers of death*, etc.] Or, "angels of death", as the Targum. As the wrath of Ahasuerus was to Haman; when it is either discovered in the countenance of a king, or expressed by his words, or signified by a messenger; it sometimes has been immediate death to a person, and often as terrible as if a messenger brought the sentence of death; yea, it is as if one messenger after another was sent on such an errand, and therefore the word is in the plural number. How terrible is the wrath of the King of kings; and even to kings themselves, who are represented as flying to rocks and mountains to hide them from it! (~~6:15~~ Revelation 6:15-17);

but a wise man will pacify it; by a proper acknowledgment of the offence committed; or by a prudent representation of his case, or the case of his friends; by soft answers and strong arguments, as Jonathan pacified the wrath of King Saul his father against David. He is a wise man that believes in Christ, and pleads his propitiatory sacrifice for the expiation of his sin, at the same time frankly acknowledging it.

Ver. 15. *In the light of the king's countenance [is] life*, etc.] When he looks with a pleasant smiling countenance on a person that has been under his displeasure, and especially if under a sentence of death, it is as life from the dead: so the light of the countenance of God, the King of kings; the discoveries of his love, the manifestations of himself, his gracious presence, communion with him, the comforts of his Spirit, the joys of his salvation,

are life unto his people, invigorate their graces, quicken their souls, and make them cheerful; see (^{<3816>}Psalm 30:5 4:6,7). And how delightful and pleasant is the countenance of Christ; which is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; and is as the sun when it shineth in its strength; and who himself is the sun of righteousness, that arises on his people with healing in his wings! How reviving his love! how comfortable fellowship with him! his absence is as death, his presence gives life;

and his favour [is] as a cloud of the latter rain: which falling a little before harvest, as was usual in Judea, revived the corn and filled it: and such is the favour of God in Christ, which is free, distinguishing, and undeserved, as rain is; the objects of it are very unworthy; and it is given often unasked for, as well as undeserved, in great abundance, and causes great cheerfulness and fruitfulness: and such is the layout of Christ, in coming into the world in the last days to save sinners his coming is said to be as the former and the latter rain, (^{<2018>}Hosea 6:3). He came from heaven, as that does; is the free gift of God, as that is; is in consequence of a decree, as that; and came suddenly, and with great acceptance to those, who knew him and waited for him; and his spiritual coming unto his people, and the discoveries of his love and free favour to them, are very reviving, cheering, and refreshing; (see ^{<3716>}Psalm 72:6).

Ver. 16. *How much better [is it] to get wisdom than gold?* etc.] To obtain and possess Christ, the fountain of wisdom, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which treasures are infinitely preferable to thousands of gold and silver; to gain the knowledge of him, and of God in him, with which eternal life is connected, and in comparison of which all things are loss and dung; to have wisdom in the hidden part, or grace in the heart, which is much more precious than gold that perisheth; to have a spiritual experimental knowledge of the Gospel, and the truths of it, which are more to be desired than gold, yea, than fine gold; all which are to be got by diligent search and inquiry, by prayer and asking for, and to be had or bought without money and without price; and the getting of them is above all other gettings; such wisdom is more valuable in itself, has a greater intrinsic worth in it than gold; it is more profitable and useful, more solid and satisfying; it is not only better, but it is abundantly better, it is inexpressibly so; it cannot be well said how much better it is, and therefore it is put by way of question and admiration; see (^{<2113>}Proverbs 3:13-15 4:7);

and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver? the same thing is designed as before, expressed in different words; a spiritual understanding of Christ and the Gospel, and an experience of the grace of God; though some, as Gersom, think that wisdom is something better than understanding, as gold, to which it is preferred, is better than silver. The Septuagint render it,

“nests of wisdom, and nests of understanding;”

and the Arabic version,

“buds of wisdom, and buds of understanding.”

Ver. 17. *The highway of the upright [is] to depart from evil,* etc.] Upright persons, such who are upright in heart, and walk uprightly; these walk in the highway of holiness, in which men, though fools, shall not err; in the King’s highway, the highway of the King of kings; in the plain beaten path of God’s commandments; and so shun the bypaths of sin, and abstain from all appearance of it: this is their common constant course of life; they are studiously concerned to walk herein, and take delight in so doing; whereby they escape many evils others fall into;

he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul, that keeps on in his way, the way in which the upright walk; whose eyes look right on, and his eyelids straight before him; who ponders the path of his feet, and turns neither to the right hand nor the left; who walks circumspectly and carefully; observes the road he is in, to keep in it, and not go out of it; such a man preserves his soul from many snares and temptations, troubles, dangers, and evils, which he would be otherwise liable to. Here the Masorites put the word **y×j** , signifying that this is the half or middle of the book.

Ver. 18. *Pride [goeth] before destruction,* etc.] As it did in the angels that sinned, who, through pride, fell into condemnation, not being able to bear the thought that the human nature, in the person of the Son of God, should be advanced above theirs; and as it did in our first parents, who, not content with their present state and circumstances, and ambitious of being as gods, knowing good and evil, ruined themselves and all their posterity; and as it has done in many of their sons, as in Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, and others;

and a haughty spirit before a fall; or, “a high spirit”, or “height of spirit”¹⁴⁶⁷; a man that carries his head high; looks upwards, and not to his

goings, sees not at what he may stumble, and so falls: moreover, the bigger a person or thing is, the greater is the fall; and very often when a man has got to the height of his riches and honour, and is swelling with pride and vanity on account of it, he is on the precipice of ruin, and his fall is immediate; which was the case of Nebuchadnezzar, who while he was expressing himself in the haughtiness of his spirit, being in the height of his glory, his kingdom departed from him, (²⁰⁴⁰Daniel 4:30,31); and this will be the case of the man of sin, or antichrist, (⁶⁶⁸⁰Revelation 18:7,8).

Ver. 19. *Better [it is to be] of an humble spirit with the lowly*, etc.] The followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, whose spirits are humbled under a sense of sin; have mean thoughts of themselves and their own righteousness, and submit to the righteousness of the Son of God, and wholly trust in him for salvation; and ascribe all they have and are to the free grace of God; humble themselves under the mighty hand of God; are resigned to his will, and patiently bear all afflictions without murmuring, and think better of others than themselves: these are not in so much danger of falling as the proud and haughty, and are more grateful to men, and acceptable to God; with these he vouchsafes to dwell; to these he gives more grace, and they shall inherit the earth. Wherefore it is better to be of such a spirit, and be ranked among and keep company with the meek and lowly,

than to divide the spoil with the proud; the spoils of the poor with proud oppressors; or spoils gotten in war with proud and ambitious princes; or the spoils of kingdoms and states with antichrist, divided by him among his proud followers: it is better to be the followers of Christ, and have but little, than to be his, and have ever so much.

Ver. 20. *He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good*, etc.] That frames and composes his discourse well on any subject he takes in hand; or manages his affairs prudently and discreetly, in which he is concerned; or that wisely attends to the affair of humility, as Aben Ezra: or rather to the word, that is, to the word of God; is not a careless, negligent, unconcerned hearer of the word, but a diligent and attentive one; whose heart is opened by the Spirit of God to attend to what is spoken in it; who lays it up in his heart, and makes it the rule of his conduct in life: such a man finds good things; things which are for his profit, edification, and instruction; good truths, good doctrines, good counsel and advice, good directions and

instructions; promises of good things, things for his present comfort and future happiness;

and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy [is] he; not to his own wisdom; nor in his own strength; nor in his riches, nor righteousness; nor in the favour of men, no, not of princes; but in the Lord, and in his Word; he shall want no good thing, he is kept in perfect peace; he is in the utmost safety, is like Mount Zion, that can never be removed, (^{<347D>}Jeremiah 17:7 ^{<238B>}Isaiah 26:3 ^{<384I>}Psalms 84:11,12 125:1).

Ver. 21. *The wise in heart shall be called prudent*, etc.] He that has true wisdom in the inward part; who knows his heart and the haughtiness of it; who has the fear of God in it, which is the beginning of wisdom; who is wise unto salvation, not only knows the scheme of it, but is experimentally acquainted with it; who has not head knowledge and wisdom only, but heart knowledge and wisdom, and behaves wisely in his life and conversation; who is so wise and endued with knowledge, as, out of a good conversation, to show his works with meekness of wisdom; such a man is called, reckoned, accounted, and spoken well of, as a prudent man among all wise and knowing persons;

and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning; who, besides a wise heart and a knowing head, have the gift of elocution; can deliver themselves in a flowing easy style; can clothe their thoughts with proper words, and convey their ideas in clear expressions, in a very edifying and instructive manner: these communicate knowledge to others, and increase it in themselves: for, while they are improving others, they improve themselves and learning also, whether it be divine or human; these are such who are “apt to teach”, (^{<348E>}1 Timothy 3:2); and if they have proper hearers to attend them, they will “increase in learning”, as a just man does, (^{<310D>}Proverbs 9:9).

Ver. 22. *Understanding [is] a wellspring of life unto him that hath it*, etc.] “The master” or “owner of it”^{f468}. As he only is to whom an understanding is given; for, whatever understanding men may have of natural and civil things, they have none of things spiritual and divine, unless it be given them by Christ. This is no other than the grace of the Spirit of God, who is a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; and this is a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life, and it issues in it; with the knowledge of Christ, and God in Christ, eternal life is connected, (^{<304A>}John 4:14 17:3); and as this knowledge and understanding of things is

communicated by wise and knowing men, they are the means and instruments of the spiritual life of those to whom they minister, and are made useful;

but the instruction of fools [is] folly; the best instruction they are capable of giving is downright folly, and issues in death.

Ver. 23. *The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth*, etc.] That is, a man that is wise in heart, as in (³¹⁶²Proverbs 16:21); his heart will teach his mouth what to say, when to say it, and before whom; it will prompt him to matter, that he shall not be at a loss what to say, nor how to say; it will furnish him with words and things; out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, (⁴¹²³Matthew 12:34);

and addeth learning to his lips: so that he does not deliver out mere words, but solid learning along with them, instructive to himself and others. The Targum is,

“and by his lips he addeth doctrine;”

or increases knowledge.

Ver. 24. *Pleasant words [are as] an honeycomb*, etc.] Jarchi interprets it of the words of the law; but it may be much better understood of the doctrines of the Gospel; such as the doctrines of God’s everlasting love, eternal election, the covenant of grace, the person of Christ as God-man; of peace and reconciliation by his blood; of remission of sins through his atoning sacrifice; of justification by his righteousness; of life and salvation by his obedience, sufferings, and death; all the doctrines of grace, which show that salvation in all its parts is owing entirely to the free grace of God; these are all pleasant to the ear of him that knows the joyful sound, and to the taste of everyone that has tasted that the Lord is gracious. The precious promises of the Gospel may be meant; which are free and unconditional, irrevocable, and immutable, never fail of accomplishment; are yea and amen in Christ, and are suited to the various cases of God’s people; these are very pleasant and delightful, when they are fitly spoken, and seasonably applied. Moreover, the speech of such as are wise in heart, true believers in Christ; their words, whether expressed in prayer or in praise, are pleasant to the Lord, and very grateful and acceptable to him: so their speech one to another, when about spiritual things; when it is with grace, then it ministers grace, and is very pleasant. Now all these, and especially the doctrines of the Gospel, are as “an honeycomb”; they are like

unto it for the manner of its production; it is wrought and filled by the laborious bee, which goes from flower to flower, and gathers honey, and brings it into the hive, and there disposes of it: so laborious ministers of the Gospel gather their doctrines from the sacred Scriptures, which they diligently search, and go from one to another, and gather something from each; and, being richly laden with the fulness of the blessing Of the Gospel of Christ, bring it into the hive of the church, and there feed men with knowledge and understanding: and the doctrines of the Gospel are like unto the honeycomb for the manner of its communication, by dropping freely, gradually, and constantly; so Gospel ministers drop the pleasant words of the Gospel freely, and without pressing, having no other constraint but love to Christ and the souls of men; they do it gradually, as men are able to bear; and constantly preach the word, in season and out of season: and as the honey which drops from the honeycomb is the choicest honey, called “life honey”; such are the truths of the Gospel, they are excellent things, the most excellent. Likewise these are as the honeycomb for the honey in it; they are like the honey out of the rock the Israelites ate of; and like that out of the lion Samson fed upon; and like that which Jonathan tasted, that enlightened his eyes. The Gospel flows from Christ, the Rock; and is to be found in him, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and as slain, and has an enlightening virtue in it; and particularly these pleasant words are said to be as the honeycomb for its sweetness and healthfulness, as follows:

sweet to the soul, and health to the bones; they are “sweet” to the “soul” of him that understands them, and that has a spiritual taste of them; not to a natural and unregenerate man, whose natural taste remains in him, and is not changed; who calls evil good, and good evil; puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; to him the doctrines of the Gospel are insipid, tasteless, and disagreeable things: nor are they sweet to a carnal professor; who, though he may express some value for them, has no spiritual gust and relish of them; but to them that believe, to whom Christ is precious, who have tasted that he is gracious; to these they are sweet, even sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb, (~~990~~ Psalm 19:10 119:103 ~~218~~ Song of Solomon 2:3 ~~311~~ Ezekiel 2:1-3:27). And they are “health to the bones”; they are the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus; they are the means of curing the diseases of the mind; of healing wounded spirits, and broken hearts, and broken bones; they make the bones which were broken to rejoice; what heals the bones strengthens the whole man, a man’s strength lying much in

his bones; these strengthen the inward man, cause believers to go from strength to strength, and to hold on and persevere to the end.

Ver. 25. *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [are] the ways of death.*] The same is said in (²¹⁴¹²Proverbs 14:12), and is here repeated because of the excellence, importance, and usefulness of the observation, and to excite an attention to it; that men may be more diligent to look into their ways, and be more cautious where and how they walk, and be more considerate and thoughtful of the issue of them. (See Gill on ²¹⁴¹²Proverbs 14:12”).

Ver. 26. *He that laboureth, laboureth for himself,* etc.] Man is born for labour; it is a part of the curse inflicted on him for sin; and his condition and circumstances are such as make it necessary, for such who will not work ought not to eat; and it is labouring for food and raiment which is here meant, and that is for a man’s self; for if he labours to be rich and lay up money, and purchase estates, these are more for others than himself, and indeed he knows not for whom he labours. It is indeed in the original, “the soul of him that labours^{f469}, labours for himself”; and it may be understood of the labour of, the soul for spiritual things, for spiritual food, for that meat which endures to everlasting life; and may intend the various exercises of religion in which men employ themselves, that they may have food for their souls, and grow thereby; such as praying, reading the Scriptures, attending on the ministry of the word and ordinances: and this labouring is for themselves; for the good and welfare of their immortal souls, for their spiritual prosperity, for the nourishing of them up unto everlasting life. It may be applied to Gospel ministers, who labour in the Lord’s vineyard, in the word and doctrine; and though in the first place they labour to promote the glory of God and the interest of Christ, and the good of souls, yet it also turns to their own account; and indeed they labour to be accepted of the Lord, and at last shall hear, “Well done, good and faithful Servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord”, (⁴¹⁵²³Matthew 25:23). Some render the words, “he that is troublesome is troublesome to himself^{f470}”, as such an one is, not only to others, but to himself also; he is the cause of great inquietude to his own mind;

for his mouth craveth it of him: that he should labour, in order to satisfy his appetite; for “all the labour of man is for his mouth”, to feed that and fill his belly, (²¹⁰¹⁷Ecclesiastes 6:7); or “his mouth boweth unto him^{f471}”; it is as it were an humble supplicant to him, entreating: him to labour to get

food for it, and satisfy its wants; or as a beast bows down to feed itself; or “boweth upon him”^{f472}; it obliges him, as the Vulgate Latin version; it compels him, whether he will or not, to work, its necessities are so pressing: and this holds good in spiritual things; a man’s mouth, or spiritual appetite, puts him upon the use of means of spiritual exercises, without which he must otherwise be in a starving condition; and is true of the ministers of the word, whose mouth obliges them; as it were; they cannot but speak the things they have heard and seen: or “his mouth reflects upon him”; upon the man that has been troublesome to himself and others; the Targum is,

“for from his mouth humiliation shall come to him;”

or his destruction, as the Syriac version.

Ver. 27. *An ungodly man diggeth up evil*, etc.] Or “a man of Belial”^{f473}, a worthless unprofitable man; a man without a yoke, not obedient to the law of God; such a man digs for sin as for a treasure; nor need he go far for it, he has enough in his own heart, out of the evil treasure of which he brings forth evil things; though he is more solicitous and diligent to search into the sins of others, and dig up them, which have long lain buried; as the Manichees raked up the sins of Austin in his youth; and as the Papists served Beza: but perhaps the evil of mischief is here rather intended, which a wicked man contrives and devises; a ditch he digs for others, though oftentimes he falls into it himself; and so the Septuagint and Arabic versions render it, “digs evils for himself”; not intentionally but eventually; (see ^{<1975>}Psalm 7:15);

and in his lips [there is] as a burning fire; his tongue is a fire, it is set on fire of hell, and it sets on fire the course of nature; and with its lies, calumnies, and detractions, devours and consumer the good names, characters, and credit of men; and deserves no other than sharp arrows of the Almighty, and coals of juniper; even the everlasting fire and flames of hell, (^{<3086>}James 3:6 ^{<3510>}Psalm 52:2,4 120:3,4).

Ver. 28. *A froward man soweth strife*, etc.] Or “a man of perversenesses”^{f474}; in whose heart is frowardness and perverseness; and whose mouth speaketh froward and perverse things, contrary to reason, law, and Gospel; and who has a spirit of contradiction, and is contrary to all men in his principles and practices; such a man sows discord and strife wherever he comes, in families, in neighbourhoods, in churches, in

commonwealths, in civil and religious societies; and he seldom fails of finding a soil fit for his purpose, or ground susceptible of the seed he sows, where it takes root and thrives; (see ²¹⁶⁹Proverbs 6:19);

and a whisperer separateth chief friends; one that goes from place to place, from house to house, carrying tales, whispering into the ears of persons things prejudicial to the characters of others, mere lies and falsehoods; such a man by his conduct separates one friend from another, even chief friends, that have been for a long time in the closest and most intimate friendship; he alienates their minds one from another, so that they will not come near one another, or keep up any correspondence as before. The word for “chief friends” is in the singular number, and signifies a prince or leader; and such men, according to the station they are in, and the influence they have, separate princes, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it, from their subjects, and stir up the latter to rebel against them; at least alienate their affections from them; and pastors of churches from their flocks, and husbands from their wives: and such a man, at last, when found out, separates his best friends from himself, as well as from one another; who drop him as a worthless person, yea, as dangerous to converse with; so sin, that whisperer and agitator, separates between God and men, (²⁸⁰²Isaiah 59:2).

Ver. 29. *A violent man enticeth his neighbour*, etc.] As false teachers do, who are grievous wolves, not sparing the flock, and who by good words and fair speeches deceive the heart of the simple; and as the man of sin, that has shed the blood of the saints, and been drunk with the same, deceives with his miracles and sorceries them that dwell on the earth;

and leadeth him into the way [that is] not good; yea, into one that is very bad; so far are false teachers from leading their neighbours into the good old way of truth and righteousness, that they lead them into pernicious ways, by whom the way; of truth is spoken evil of; they lead them into a ditch, and into destruction hereafter; as does the man of sin and violence his followers.

Ver. 30. *He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things*, etc.] Or “perverse” or “contrary things”^{f475}; he shuts his eyes, that his thoughts might not be disturbed and distracted by visible objects, but might be more free and composed, and intent upon the things he is meditating and devising; or he shuts his eyes against light, against Scripture evidence, which he does not care to come to, lest his principles and practices should be reprov'd; he

shuts his eyes, and will not look into the Scriptures, that he may form and devise schemes of doctrine and worship contrary to them. Some render it, he winks with his eyes, as in (^{<2163>}Proverbs 6:13); so the Targum; he gives the hint thereby to his companions, when is the proper time to circumvent an innocent person, and to put in execution the scheme he had devised;

moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass; either as persons in deep thought used to do; or as a token to others to set about the evil designed and contrived; or rather as acting a deceitful part, as a false teacher; not speaking out his mind freely, but muttering out his words, handling the word of God deceitfully, and not by manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, as a faithful minister does; and by such artful methods brings his evil designs to pass. The Vulgate Latin version renders it, "biting his lips"; so a wicked man does through indignation at a good man, and through desire of revenge; and when he plots against him, he gnashes at him with his teeth, (^{<3572>}Psalm 37:12). The Targum is,

"threatening with his lips;"

he gives out menaces of evil things, and performs them; which is true of the man of sin, (^{<635>}Revelation 13:5-7).

Ver. 31. *The hoary head [is] a crown of glory*, etc.] Gray hairs, white locks through age are very ornamental; look very beautiful, bespeak gravity, wisdom, and prudence, and command reverence and respect; with the ancient Romans^{f476}, greater honour was paid to age than to family or wealth; and the elder were revered by the younger next to God, and in the stead of parents; (see Gill on "^{<852>}Leviticus 19:32");

[if] it be found in the way of righteousness; that is, if such who are old and stricken in years are like Zacharias and Elisabeth, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; when they are found in Christ, having on his righteousness; and when they live soberly, righteously, and godly; when they walk in the ways of God and true religion; keep up family worship, and private devotion; as well as constantly attend the ministry of the word and ordinances; then are they very venerable and respectable; their old age is a good old age; and in a short time they shall have the crown of glory which fadeth not away: but otherwise a sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed; an old man in the

open ways of sin and vice, laden with iniquity, is a very contemptible and shocking sight.

Ver. 32. [*He that is] slow to anger is better than the mighty*, etc.] Than a mighty warrior or conqueror; as Alexander who conquered his enemies, and even all the world, and yet in his wrath slew his best friends: a man that is slow to anger is esteemed by the Lord, respected by men, and is happy in himself; and is preferable to the strongest man that is not master of himself and of his passions;

and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city; one that has the command of his temper, that can govern himself, and not suffer his passions to exceed due bounds, is superior in strength to him that can storm a castle or take a fortified city; it is easier to do the one than the other; courage of mind joined with wisdom, and assisted by a proper number of persons, may do the one; but it requires the grace of God, and the assistance of his spirit, thoroughly to do the other. Cicero says^{f477}, in all ages

“fewer men are found who conquer their own lusts than that overcome the armies of enemies.”

Ver. 33. *The lot is cast into the lap*, etc.] Of a man’s garment, or into his bosom, or into a hat, cap, urn, or whatsoever he has in his lap, and from whence it is taken out; which used to be done in choosing officers, civil or ecclesiastical; in dividing inheritances, and determining doubtful cases; and making up differences, and putting an end to strife and contentions, which otherwise could not be done: and this ought not to be used in trivial cases, or to gratify curiosity, or for the sake of gain, or rashly and superstitiously; but seriously and religiously, with prayer, and in faith, and with a view to the divine direction, and submission to it; for a lot has the nature of an oath, and is an appeal to the omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent Being;

but the whole disposing thereof [is] of the Lord; or “the judgment”^{f478} of it; the judgment that is to be made by it concerning persons or things; it being so directed and ordered by him as to fall upon the person it should; or to make known the thing in doubt and debate according to his will, in which all parties concerned should acquiesce. This is to be ascribed, not to blind chance and fortune, to the influence of the stars, or to any invisible created being, angel or devil, but to the Lord only; there is no such thing as

chance, or events by chance; those events which seem most fortuitous or contingent are all disposed, ordered, and governed, by the sovereign will of God.