

CHAPTER 20

Ver. 1. *Wine [is] a mocker, strong drink [is] raging*, etc.] Wine deceives a man; it not only overcomes him before he is aware, but it promises him a pleasure which it does not give; but, on the contrary, excessive drinking gives him pain, and so mocks him; yea, it exposes him to reproach and disgrace, and to the mockery and derision of others; as well as it sets him to scoff at his companions, and even to mock at religion, and all that is good and serious; (see ^{<3075>}Hosea 7:5); and strong drink not only disturbs the brain, and puts the spirits in a ferment, so that a man rages within, but it sets him a raving and quarrelling with his company, and everybody he meets with; such generally get into broils and contentions, and get woe, sorrow, and wounds, (^{<4123>}Proverbs 23:29,30). Aben Ezra gives this as the sense of the words,

“a man of wine”

(that is, one that is given to wine, a wine bibber), so Ben Melech,

“is a mocker, and he cries out for strong drink, that it may be given him;”

which is not a bad sense of the words.

and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise; whosoever gives himself to it, is not on his guard against it, but is overcome by it, does not act a wise but an unwise part: wine besots as well as deceives men. This may be applied to the wine of fornication, or to the false doctrine and superstition of the church of Rome; with which the nations of the earth are deceived and made drunk, and which puts them upon blaspheming God, deriding his people, and using cruelty to them, (^{<6172>}Revelation 17:2,3,6 18:3,23).

Ver. 2. *The fear of a king [is] as the roaring of a lion*, etc.] The wrath and displeasure of a king, which causes fear; (see ^{<2092>}Proverbs 19:12); kings should be terrors to evil works and workers, though not to good ones, (^{<6133>}Romans 13:3). This is true of the King of kings, who one day will be terrible to the drunkards, the mockers, and murderers of his people, before spoken of;

[whoso] provoketh him to anger sinneth [against] his own soul; he exposes his life to danger: the Targum supplies it as we do. It may be rendered, his “soul sinneth”^{f555}; he is guilty of sin, as well as is in danger of punishment; (see ^{<1085>}Proverbs 8:36).

Ver. 3. *[It is] an honour for a man to cease from strife*, etc.] As Abraham did, (^{<0137>}Genesis 13:7,8); when engaged in a quarrel with his neighbour, or in a lawsuit, or in a religious controversy, especially when he finds he is in the wrong; and indeed, if he is in the right, when he perceives it is like to issue in no good, and is only about words to no profit, it is an honour to drop it;

but every fool will be meddling; with things he has no concern in, or is not equal to; yet will carry on the debate, though it is to his disgrace; (see ^{<1074>}Proverbs 17:14).

Ver. 4. *The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold*, etc.] Or, “in the cold”; in the time of cold, as Aben Ezra; in the time of autumn, which is the time of ploughing, when it begins to be cold weather, and winter is drawing on: and this is discouraging to the sluggard, who does not care to take his hands out of his bosom to feed himself, and much less to plough; (see ^{<1024>}Proverbs 19:24);

[therefore] shall he beg in harvest, and [have] nothing; he shall ask of those who have ploughed and sowed, and are now reaping and gathering in their increase at harvest time; but they shall give him nothing; for such as will not work should not eat; and if a man will not plough and sow, he cannot expect to reap, nor should he be encouraged in begging. This holds good in spiritual things; such who have been slothful and sluggish about their spiritual affairs, unconcerned for the grace of God, and indolent in the use of means, or performance of duty, will ask when too late, or of wrong persons, and shall not have it; as the foolish virgins ask oil of the wise, when the bridegroom is come; and the rich man for water from Abraham, when in hell, (^{<1138>}Matthew 25:8 ^{<1024>}Luke 16:24).

Ver. 5. *Counsel in the heart of man [is like] deep water*, etc.] Pure and undisturbed, but secret, hidden, and hard to be come at: such are the things of the spirit of a man, the thoughts of his mind, the devices of his heart; which, though easily known by the searcher of hearts, are not easily penetrated into by men; or it is not easily got out of them what is in them, especially in some men, who are very close and reserved. This is true of

wicked men, who seek sleep to hide their counsel; and of good men, especially studious men, who have got a great deal of wisdom and knowledge in them, but not very communicative, being slow of speech, and silent in conversation;

but a man of understanding will draw it out; he will find ways and means to discover the secret designs of wicked men, whether against church or state; and, by asking proper questions, an understanding man will get out useful things from men of knowledge, the most reserved: some men must be pumped, and a good deal of pains must be taken with them, to get out anything of them, as in getting water out of a deep well, and which when got is very good; and so is that wisdom and knowledge which is gotten by an inquisitive man from another of superior knowledge, but not very diffusive of it.

Ver. 6. *Most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness*, etc.] As the Pharisee did, in (^{<4281>}Luke 18:11,12); and as the Pharisees in common did; who did all their works to be seen of men, and made clean the outside of the cup and platter; and were very careful to appear outwardly righteous to men, (^{<4285>}Matthew 23:5,25,28). And indeed this is the general cast of men; everyone is proclaiming his goodness to others, and would be thought to be good men; and cannot be easy with doing a good action, unless it is known, and particularly acts of beneficence and alms deeds; and are like the Pharisees, who, on such occasions, sounded a trumpet before them, (^{<4182>}Matthew 6:2). And the word may be rendered, “his mercy”^{f556}, or his kindness to the poor: the Targum renders it,

“many of the children of men are called merciful men;”

and so the Vulgate Latin version; and they like to be so called and accounted, whether they are so or not;

but a faithful man who can find? who answers to the character he gives of himself, or others upon his own representation give him; who is as good as his word, and, having promised assistance and relief, gives it; and who, having boasted that he has done a kindness to such an one and such an one, does the same likewise to another when applied to; or who sticks to his friend, and does not forsake him in his adversity, but supports and supplies him whom he knew in prosperity; it is hard and rare to find such a man; (see ^{<4211>}Psalms 12:1). Or, though every man is talking of his good works,

and boasting of his goodness, it is difficult to find an Israelite indeed, in whom the true grace of God is.

Ver. 7. *The just [man] walketh in his integrity*, etc.] This is the faithful and upright man, who is made righteous by the obedience of Christ; and walks by faith in him, and according to the truth of the Gospel;

his children [are] blessed after him; with temporal blessings; and, walking in the same integrity as he does, they are blessed with spiritual blessings here, and eternal blessedness hereafter; see (~~1876~~ Psalm 37:26). It is an observation of an Heathen poet¹⁵⁵⁷, that good things befall the children of the godly, but not the children of the ungodly.

Ver. 8. *A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment*, etc.] That executes judgment himself, as David and Solomon did; who ascends the throne, and sits personally there, and hears and tries causes himself, and not by his servants:

scattereth away all evil with his eyes; all evil men, as the Targum; everyone that is evil, as Aben Ezra: he will easily and quickly discern who is evil, or who is in a bad cause before him, and will pass sentence on him, and drive him away from him with shame and disgrace, and to receive deserved punishment; or he will terrify persons from coming before him with false witness against their neighbour, or with a wrong cause. This may be applied to Christ, the King of kings, and Judge of all; whose eyes are as a flame of fire; who will clearly see into all hearts and actions, when he shall sit on his throne of judgment; and shall pass the righteous and definitive sentence, and shall drive the wicked into hell, into everlasting punishment.

Ver. 9. *Who can say, I have made my heart clean*, etc.] The heart of man is naturally unclean, the mind, conscience, understanding, will, and affections; there is no part clean, all are defiled with sin; and though there is such a thing as a pure or clean heart, yet not as made so by men; it is God that has made the heart, that can only make it clean, or create a clean heart in men; it is not to be done by themselves, or by anything that they can do; it is done only by the grace of God, and blood of Christ: God has promised to do it, and he does it; and to him, and to him only, is it to be ascribed;

I am pure from my sin? the sin of nature or of action: such indeed who are washed from their sins in the blood of Christ; whose sins are all pardoned for his sake, and who are justified from all things by his righteousness; they

are pure from sin, none is to be seen in them, or found upon them in a legal sense: they are all fair and comely, and without fault in the sight of God; their iniquities are caused to pass from them; and they are clothed with fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints: but then none are pure from indwelling sin, nor from the commission of sin; no man can say this, any more than the former; if he does, he is an ignorant man, and does not know the plague of his heart; and he is a vain pharisaical man; yea, a man that does not speak the truth, nor is the truth in him, (~~6108~~1 John 1:8).

Ver. 10. *Divers weights, [and] divers measures*, etc.] Or, “a stone and a stone, and an ephah and an ephah”^{f558}. Stones being in old time used in weighing, and an “ephah” was a common measure among the Jews; and these ought not to be different; one stone or weight for buying, and another for selling; and one measure to buy goods in with, and another to sell out with; the one too heavy, the other too light; the one too large, and the other too scanty; whereby justice is not done between man and man; whereas they ought to be just and equal, (~~6105~~Leviticus 19:35,36);

both of them [are] alike abomination to the Lord; who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and requires of men to do justly; and abhors every act of injustice, and whatever is detrimental to men’s properties; (see ~~6110~~Proverbs 11:1 16:11).

Ver. 11. *Even a child is known by his doings*, etc.] As well as a man; “ye shall know them by their fruits”, (~~4176~~Matthew 7:16); professors and profane. So a child soon discovers its genius by its actions; it soon shows its inclination and disposition; and some shrewd guesses may be made how it will turn out, a wise man or a fool, a virtuous or a vicious man; though this does not always hold good, yet something may be observed, which may be a direction to parents in the education of their children, and placing them out to what is proper and suitable for them. Some observe, that the word has a quite contrary meaning, that “a child carries himself a stranger by his doings”^{f559}; so that he is not known by them: he so conceals and disguises himself, he acts so fraudulently and deceitfully, and plays the hypocrite, and puts the cheat on men, that they cannot tell what he is, nor what he will be; and if children can thus dissemble, as not to be known by their actions, then much more grown persons;

whether his work [be] pure, and whether [it be] right; not what his present work is, or actions are, but what his later life and conversation will be; which in some measure may be judged of, though not with certainty and

exactness; (see ^{<0216>}Proverbs 22:6); especially when he acts a covert and deceitful part.

Ver. 12. *The hearing ear, and the seeing eye*, etc.] There may be an ear that hears not, and an eye that seeth not, and which men may make; the painter can paint an ear and an eye, and a carver can carve both; but they are ears that hear not, and eyes that see not, (^{<0185>}Psalm 115:5,6); but such as can hear and see are of the Lord's own make;

the Lord hath made even both of them; they are the effects of his wisdom, power, and goodness; (see ^{<0041>}Exodus 4:11 ^{<0947>}Psalm 94:7,8); they are both senses of excellent use and service; great mercies and blessings of life, for which men should be abundantly thankful, and pray for the continuance of, and make use of to the best purposes; they are means of conveying much knowledge to the mind, and by which it may be cultivated and improved in it. The words may be considered in a figurative as well as a literal sense. Some by "the seeing eye" understand the civil magistrate, who is that to the body politic as the eyes are to the natural body, eminent in it, overlook it, watch and provide for its good, and against its hurt; (see ^{<0061>}Numbers 10:31 ^{<0294>}Job 29:14-16); and by "the hearing ear" the obedient subject, that hearkens to the laws and directions of his governors, and cheerfully obeys them, and both these are of the Lord's making; civil magistracy is his ordinance, and civil magistrates are ordained by him; and from him they have their qualifications fitting them for their office; and it is owing to the overruling providence of God on the hearts of men that they are inclined to yield subjection to them. Others think that by the "seeing eye" are meant the ministers of the word, who are set in the highest place in the church; whose business it is to inspect, take the oversight of, and watch the souls of men; to pry and search into the truths of the Gospel, and show them to others: and by the "hearing ear" the hearers of the word, that receive it readily in the love of it, and heartily obey it. I am rather of opinion that one and the same sort of persons are intended; converted ones, who have the "hearing ear", who try what they hear by the word of God; understand what they hear, know it experimentally; can distinguish truth from error, approve and love the Gospel, receive it with all gladness and readiness, with eagerness and pleasure; keep it when they have it, and practise what they hear, and bring forth fruit to the glory of God: this they have not of themselves, being naturally averse to and dull of hearing, and even stop their ears to the truth; but it comes by the word, and is the Lord's work, and owing to his mighty power, who opens their ears, gives

them new ears, which they have in regeneration; when they hear spiritually, profitably, pleasantly, comfortably, and to their great astonishment: these also have the “seeing eye”, a sight of themselves, their sinful and lost estate; of the plague of their own hearts, their want of righteousness, and impotence to do anything that is good; a sight of Christ, of the loveliness of his person, of the fulness of his grace, of their need of him, and of his suitability as a Saviour and Redeemer; and this is not of themselves, who are dark and darkness itself, but they are made light in the Lord; he opens their eyes by his spirit and by means of his word, which is a work of almighty power.

Ver. 13. *Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty*, etc.] Sleep is a very great natural blessing; it is a gift of God, what nature requires, and is desirable; it is to be loved, though not immoderately; it is sweet to a man, and what he should be thankful for; yet should not indulge himself in to the neglect of the proper business of life; nor to be used but at the proper time for it; for the eye is made for sight, and not for sleep only, as Aben Ezra observes, connecting the words with the preceding; and therefore should not be kept shut and inattentive to business, which must necessarily end in poverty and want; (see ^{<116>}Proverbs 6:9-11); and so spiritual sleep and slothfulness bring on a spiritual poverty in the souls of men, both as to the exercise of grace and the performance of duty;

open thine eyes, [and] thou shalt be satisfied with bread; that is, open thine eyes from sleep, awake and keep so, and be sedulous and industrious in the business of thy calling; so shalt thou have a sufficiency of food for thyself and family; (see ^{<121>}Proverbs 12:11). It may be applied to awaking out of sleep in a spiritual sense, and to a diligent attendance to duty and the use of means, whereby the souls of men come to be satisfied with the goodness of the Lord, and the fatness of his house; (see ^{<154>}Ephesians 5:14 ^{<161>}Psalms 65:4).

Ver. 14. [*It is*] *naught, [it is] naught, saith the buyer*, etc.] When he comes to the shop of the seller, or to market to buy goods, he undervalues them, says they are not so good as they should be, nor so cheap as he can buy them at;

but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth; after he has brought the seller to as low a price as he can, and has bought the goods, and gone away with them, and got home among his friends; then he boasts what a bargain he has bought, how good the commodity is, how he has been too many for

the seller, and has outwitted him; and so glories in his frauds and tricks, and rejoices in his boasting, and all such rejoicing is evil, (^{<3046>}James 4:16). Jarchi applies this to a man that is a hard student in the law, and through much difficulty gets the knowledge of it, when he is ready to pronounce himself unhappy; but when he is got full fraught with wisdom, then he rejoices at it, and glories in it.

Ver. 15. *There is gold, and a multitude of rubies*, etc.] A man may have a large quantity of either, or of both of thorn, as some men have; for there is much of them in the world, not only in mines and quarries, but in the houses and cabinets of men;

but the lips of knowledge [are] a precious jewel; knowledge even of things natural, and a gift of elocution to express it by, are a rare jewel, and much more precious than gold and rubies, than a multitude of them; these are not to be mentioned with it, it is not equalled by them, it is greatly superior to them; (see ^{<3032>}Job 28:12-19); and much more spiritual knowledge, and a capacity of expressing that to the edification of others; and especially Christ, the Wisdom of God, and the knowledge of him, who is more precious than rubies, and all desirable things, in comparison of which all things are loss and dung, (^{<3084>}Proverbs 3:14,15 ^{<3088>}Philippians 3:8).

Ver. 16. *Take his garment that is surety [for] a stranger*, etc.] Which a man is cautioned against, (^{<3081>}Proverbs 6:1); but if a man will be so weak and foolish, others ought to take care of him, and be cautious how they trust him; for he is in danger of being ruined by his suretyship, and therefore nothing should be lent him without a pledge, without a proper security; for though it was not lawful to take the garment of a poor man for a pledge, at least it was not to be kept after sunset, (^{<3026>}Exodus 22:26); yet it was right to take such a man's garment who had or would be thought to have such an abundance as to be surety for a stranger. Some think these words are to be taken as a prophecy of what would be the case of such a man that is a surety for a stranger; in the issue he will be stripped of all he has, and have not a coat to put on. It has been applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, who became a surety for such who were foreigners and strangers, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; and who had the garment of his human nature taken from him and which was a pledge and ransom for the sins of his people;

and take a pledge of him for a strange woman; a harlot; such as have to do with lewd women are not to be trusted; for they are in a fair way for ruin,

and therefore should not be intrusted with anything without a pledge; all in connection with such creatures lose their credit; it is dangerous having any concern with them in trade for they are liable to be brought to a piece of bread; and therefore persons should be cautious how they trade with them, and should observe to secure themselves.

Ver. 17. *Bread of deceit [is] sweet to a man*, etc.] Which may be understood of sin in general, which is bread to the sinner, he eats it: it is called “the bread of wickedness”, (^{<2047>}Proverbs 4:17); but it is but poor bread, no other than ashes (^{<2340>}Isaiah 44:20); it is “bread of deceit”; there is a deceitfulness in all sin; it is in appearance fair and pleasant to the eye, like the fruit our first parents ate of; or like the apples of Sodom, of which it is reported that they are very beautiful to look at, but when touched drop into ashes; sin promises pleasure, profit, honour, liberty, peace, and impunity, yet gives neither; but the reverse, pain, loss, shame, servitude distress, and destruction; and yet it is sweet to an unregenerate man, one of a vicious taste, or whose taste remains unchanged; it is natural to him and he takes as much delight in it as in eating and drinking; and especially such sins as are called constitution ones, which he is not easily prevailed upon to part with; wickedness is sweet in his mouth, he rolls it and keeps it as a sweet morsel under his tongue, and forsakes it not, (^{<1812>}Job 20:12-14). It may be applied to particular sins, as to adultery, as it is by Jarchi, and with which may be compared (^{<2047>}Proverbs 9:17); and to riches unlawfully gotten; (see ^{<1815>}Job 20:15,16); and to the cruel usage and persecution of the people of God, called the bread of wickedness and wine of violence, which wicked men take as much delight in as in eating and drinking, (^{<2047>}Proverbs 4:17 ^{<0144>}Psalms 14:4); particularly the cruelty of the church of Rome, who has made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, in which she delights, and will be bitter to her in the end, (^{<6176>}Revelation 17:6 16:6 18:7,8). It may be interpreted of false doctrine; so the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees is signified by leavened bread, (^{<0165>}Matthew 16:6,12); this is not true bread, does not strengthen, nourish, and refresh, as the Gospel does, but eats as a canker; it is not solid and substantial, but mere chaff, it is bread of falsehood and lying; false teachers lie in wait to deceive, their doctrines are lies in hypocrisy, and, yet these are sweet unto, and taken down greedily by carnal persons; particularly the doctrine of justification by works: this is the bread some men live on, but it is only husks which swine eat; it is feeding on wind, and filling the belly with east wind, which swells and vainly puffs up the fleshly mind; it is contrary to the, Gospel, and is not

of the truth, and will deceive persons that trust to it; and yet it is sweet to a natural man; his own righteousness, and to trust to it, is natural to him; it is his own, and what he has laboured for, and is fond of; it affords room for boasting, and he does not care to part with it;

but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel; with that which will be ungrateful, uncomfortable, and distressing to him; the conscience of a sinner, who has been taking his fill of sin and pleasure in it shall be filled with remorse and distress; and with bitter reflections upon himself; with a dreadful sense of divine wrath, and fearful apprehensions of it now; and destruction and damnation will be his portion hereafter; and this will be the consequence of all false doctrine, and of a man's trusting to his own righteousness and despising Christ's; (see ^{<6011>}2 Peter 2:1 ^{<1212>}Matthew 22:12,13).

Ver. 18. [*Every purpose is established by counsel,* etc.] Or “the thought”^{f560} of a man, everyone of them, what he has thought to do, formed a scheme of in his mind, and resolved upon, by taking advice of his friends, and especially by asking counsel of God, who gives, wisdom liberally, and upbraids not; he is confirmed in his good designs; and he cheerfully pursues them, and they are ordered and directed to the glory of God, his own good and the good of others; for this can only be understood of wise and good thoughts and purposes;

and with good advice make war; this should not be entered upon rashly, without first considering whether there is a just and lawful cause of it; and without consulting the necessary charge and expense of it; whether there is a sufficiency of men and money to carry it on; and what may probably be the issue of it. It is right in a king to advise with his privy council, or with the chief council of the nation; but, above all, both he and his people should seek advice of the Lord on such an occasion; (see ^{<1431>}Luke 14:31,32). This may be applied to our spiritual warfare with sin, Satan, and the world; not that it should be any doubt with whether we should engage in such a war; but we should advise with experienced soldiers, and especially with God and his word, what weapons to take, and how to use them; and consider in whose name and strength we are to fight; and inquire and learn the force, methods, and designs of the enemy, and where to guard against them or attack them. Jarchi interprets it of making war with Satan by repentance, prayer, and fasting.

Ver. 19. *He that goeth about [as] a talebearer revealeth secrets*, etc.] Or, “he that revealeth secrets goeth about as a talebearer”; a man that has really got the secrets of others out of them respecting themselves and families, and the affairs of them, or however pretends he master of them; goes about telling his tales from house to house, to the great prejudice of those whose secrets he is entrusted with, or pretends to be; and to the great prejudice of those to whom he tells them, as well as to his own; this is contrary to the law of Moses, and the rules of Christianity, (^{<B1916>}Leviticus 19:16 ^{<A1813>}1 Timothy 5:13);

therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips; or “mingle not with him”^{f561}; do not associate with him, do not keep him company, have nothing to say to him or do with him; for when he flatters you, and highly praises and extols you, he has a design upon you to get what he can out of you, in order to expose you elsewhere; therefore suspect him, be upon your guard, shun him and avoid him. It may be applied to false teachers, and their deceptions with good words and fair speeches; the word used signifies to deceive with the lips; (see ^{<A1618>}Romans 16:18); and well agrees with the parasites of Rome, (^{<A1823>}Revelation 18:23).

Ver. 20. *Whoso curseth his father or his mother*, etc.] This is dreadful indeed! a person must be got to a great pitch of wickedness to do this; to curse his parents, one or other of them, that have been the instruments of his being, and by whom he has been brought up and put out into the world; to slight them, despise them, and mock at them, is highly base and criminal, but to curse them is shocking! what can such expect but the curse of God upon them?

his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness; he shall be deprived of his natural sight; (see ^{<A1017>}Proverbs 30:17); or the very light of nature shall be extinct in him; and indeed such an one acts as if not guided by it, nor under its influence; or whatsoever favour from the Lord he has enjoyed, it shall be taken from him; his lamp or candle of outward felicity shall be quenched, and burn no longer; (see ^{<B1815>}Job 18:5 22:17); or his soul, the candle of the Lord, in him, (^{<A1017>}Proverbs 20:27); shall be removed; or he “shall die”, not only a corporeal but an eternal death; see (^{<A1217>}Exodus 21:17); “blackness of darkness”^{f562} as the words may be rendered, are reserved for him in the world to come, and which will be his portion, (^{<A1113>}Jude 1:13).

Ver. 21. *An inheritance [may be] gotten hastily at the beginning*, etc.] Of a man's setting out in the world in trade and business; and which sometimes is got lawfully, and this must be excepted from this proverb; but generally what is got hastily and in a short time is got unlawfully, and so does not prosper. Some Jewish interpreters, as Gersom, understand it of an inheritance which comes to persons from their friends, without any labour or industry of theirs; and which they are not careful to keep, but, as it lightly comes, it lightly goes: here is a various reading; our version follows the marginal reading, and which is followed by the Targum, Jarchi, and Gersom, and by the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate Latin versions; but the written text is, "an inheritance loathsome" or "abominable"; an ill gotten one, so the word is used in (³¹⁰⁸Zechariah 11:8). Schultens, from the use of the word in the Arabic language, which signifies to be covetous, renders it "covetously got" or "possessed"¹⁵⁶³; and so the Arabic version is, "an inheritance greedily desired", obtained through covetousness and illicit practices; but in his late commentary on this book he renders the passage, by the help of Arabism, "an inheritance smitten with the curse of sordidness", as being sordidly got and enjoyed;

but the end thereof shall not be blessed; it will not continue, it will be taken away from them, and put into some other hands. Jarchi illustrates it by the tribes of Gad and Reuben making haste to take their part on the other side Jordan before their brethren, and were the first that were carried captive.

Ver. 22. *Say not thou, I will recompense evil*, etc.] With evil; do an injury to one that has done one to you; private revenge is not to be taken, but should be left to God, to whom vengeance belongs, (¹⁵²⁵Deuteronomy 32:35,41);

[but] wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee; commit thyself and cause to God; leave it with him to avenge thy wrongs; wait upon him in the way of thy duty, and wait his own time to do thee justice; he will at the proper season, and in his own way, save thee from thine enemy, and make a righteous retribution to him.

Ver. 23. *Divers weights [are] an abomination unto the Lord*, etc.] (See Gill on "³¹¹⁰Proverbs 20:10"); which is here repeated for the further confirmation of it, and that it might be taken notice of and avoided; and perhaps this sin of using false weights and measures was common with the Jews;

and a false balance [is] not good; in the sight of God; but an abomination, as in (²⁰⁰⁰Proverbs 11:1); nor is it good for men in the issue; for though they may gain by it at present, it will prove a loss to them in the end, since it will bring a curse on all they get.

Ver. 24. *Man's goings [are] of the Lord*, etc.] In a natural and literal sense, the instruments of going are of the Lord; the act of motion from place to place is not without the concurrence of his providence; as in him we live, and move, and have our being, so “in and by him we move”; he preserves our going out and coming in; and as the preservation, so the success and prosperity of journeying are owing to his providence, and the whole is under his care and direction: and so likewise, in a civil sense, all the civil concerns, business, and actions of life, are guided by his providence; there is a time for every purpose under heaven, and the success of all depends on a divine blessing; and things are with every man in civil life according to the providence of God, and as it is his pleasure they should be; and it is by him they are directed to take this and the other step, the issue of which is according to his will: and this may be applied to men's goings in a spiritual and religious sense; faith, which is properly a man's going to Christ as a perishing sinner for pardon and cleansing, for righteousness and life, for food and rest, and eternal salvation, is not of a man's self, it is of God; it is his gift, and of his operation; no man can go to Christ in this way unless it be given him of God, or he is drawn by his grace, (¹⁸⁰⁰John 6:35,57,44,65); and all spiritual actions which flow from hence are by the grace of God, and under his influence and direction; as walking in the path of truth, it is the Lord that teaches it, causes to choose it, leads into it, and preserves there; walking in the statutes and ordinances of the Lord, and in the ways of righteousness and holiness, is of him, and owing to his Spirit puts within his people; and indeed all good works done by them, which may be called their goings, he has foreordained that they should walk in them; it is by the grace of God, and in the strength of Christ, and with the assistance of the blessed Spirit, they walk on in them; and their perseverance in faith and holiness, or their going from strength to strength, is all of the Lord;

how can a man then understand his own way? even of a journey in a literal sense, what will be the issue and event of it, when or whether ever he shall return to his own house again, since all is under the direction and providence of God; and also of his civil affairs, he knows his beginning, and how he goes on for the present; but what will be the end he knows not;

and a natural and unregenerate man knows not what way he is in, where he is going, and what his last end will be; being in darkness, in which he was born, brought up, and continues, he does not rightly understand what is his duty, what he should do, what is the good and perfect will of God, what the way is in which he should go, and which is for his good; nor the way everlasting, which leads to eternal life, few find this way. Or it may be understood of the way of the Lord, “how can a man then understand his way?” the Lord’s way, not man’s; the way of the Lord in providence, which is as the deep, and unsearchable; and the way of life and salvation by Christ, which is of the Lord’s devising and resolving on; this way of peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life, is not known by the natural man; and when it is externally revealed in the word, and by the outward ministry of it, it is not understood so as to be approved of, but is despised, unless God gives a heart to know it, or a spiritual and experimental understanding of it.

Ver. 25. [*It is a snare to the man [who] devoureth [that which is] holy,* etc.] Which is separated to sacred uses, is devoted to the Lord, as firstfruits, tithes, offerings, etc. which if a man converts to his own use is sacrilege, and this is a sin and a snare, and brings ruin on him; (see ^{<308>}Malachi 3:8,9);

and after vows to make inquiry: that is a sin and a snare also; a man should first inquire before he vows, whether it is right for him to make a vow, and whether he is able to keep it; it is too late after the vow is made to inquire about the lawfulness or expedience of it, and how to find out ways and means to dissolve it and be clear of it; for it is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay, (^{<204>}Ecclesiastes 5:4,5); when a thing is in a man’s own hands, he may do what he will; but when he has devoted it to another use, it is no longer in his power; as the case of Ananias and Sapphira shows, (^{<401>}Acts 5:1-4).

Ver. 26. *A wise king scattereth the wicked,* etc.] Or “fans [them] away”^{f564}; separates them from his good counsellors, courtiers, and subjects; scatters them from his presence and court, and breaks their counsels and confederacies one with another; he discovers, discountenances, and discourages them; (see Gill on “^{<208>}Proverbs 20:8”);

and bringeth the wheel over them; alluding to the custom of the eastern nations turning a cart wheel over the grain in threshing it out, and agreeably to the metaphor in the preceding clause; (see ^{<337>}Isaiah

28:27,28). Though some think it refers to a sort of punishment inflicted on malefactors in those times and countries, by putting them under harrows drawn on wheels, as breaking upon the wheel has been since used; see (~~1023~~ 2 Samuel 12:31). The Arabic version understands it of exile. Jarchi interprets the wise king of the Lord, and the wicked of Pharaoh and his host, on whom he brought the wheel, or gave measure for measure, and punished in a way of retaliation; and to this sense it is by some^{f565} interpreted,

“as the wheel turns over, just in the same place, so as the wicked hath done, it shall be done to them.”

It may be applied to Christ, the wise King, who scatters all his and our enemies; whose fan is in his hand, and he wilt thoroughly purge his floor, (~~4182~~ Matthew 3:12).

Ver. 27. *The spirit of man [is] the candle of the Lord*, etc.] The rational soul of man is a light set up in him; this is what is commonly called the light of nature; it was a bright and burning light at first, but through sin is become a very feeble one; by which men have only a glimmering view of divine things, of God and his worship, and of what he would have done, or not done; by this light men do but grope after him, if happily they may find him and know his will; it is but like a candle light at best, in comparison of divine revelation, or the Gospel of the grace of God, which has shone out like the sun in its meridian glory; and especially in comparison of the sun of righteousness, Christ Jesus, and the light of the divine Spirit; yet this is a light set up by the Lord, a candle of his; it comes from the Father of lights, he is the author and maintainer of it; it is a spirit and understanding which is by the inspiration of the Almighty; (see ~~4007~~ Genesis 2:7 ~~8308~~ Job 32:8 ~~8101~~ Zechariah 12:1);

searching all the inward parts of the belly; or heart; the thoughts, intents, and purposes of it; which are the things of a man that only the spirit of man knows; by this candle, or light, he can look into his own heart, the inmost recesses of it, and reflect upon his thoughts and schemes, and judge in some measure whether right or wrong; there is a conscience in man, which, unless seared, passes sentence on what is in man, or done by him, and either excuses or accuses; (see ~~4120~~ 1 Corinthians 2:10,11) (~~4114~~ Romans 2:14,15).

Ver. 28. *Mercy and truth preserve the king*, etc.] Which are two good qualifications in a prince; not ruling his subjects with rigour and cruelty, but with tenderness and clemency; easing them as much as he can of burdens and pressures; showing compassion to the distressed, and pardoning delinquents when the case will admit of it; as also being faithful to his word, promises, and engagements; inviolably adhering to the laws and constitution of the nation, and steady in his administrations of justice; these preserve him in the affections of his people, and make him safe and secure on his throne; and because of these the Lord preserves him from his enemies. It maybe rendered, “grace and truth”^{f566}; and applied to Christ, who is full of both, and which are said to preserve him, (^{<3911>}Psalm 40:11);

and his throne is upholden by mercy; this explains what is meant by the preservation of him, and what is the security of his throne and kingdom, which is clemency and goodness to his subjects.

Ver. 29. *The glory of young men [is] their strength*, etc.] That is the excellent thing in them, and it is to their honour when it is employed in the service of their king and country, and especially in the service of God and religion; though it does not become them to glory in it, (^{<3923>}Jeremiah 9:23);

and the beauty of old men [is] the gray head; an index of wisdom and prudence; (see ^{<3812>}Job 12:12). The design of the proverb is to show that both have their excellencies and usefulness, young men and old men, and should not despise one another; nor either of them be despised in a commonwealth, both being useful in it, the one for strength, the other for counsel; and so in the church of Christ; (see ^{<3913>}1 John 2:13,14).

Ver. 30. *The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil*, etc.] Rubs it off and scours it away, as the word^{f567} signifies, or is a clearing and rubbing it off; some men must be beaten black and blue, or must have very sore correction, before they can be reclaimed and reformed from their evil ways; so some interpret it of the evil man^{f568}: sanctified afflictions to God’s people are the means of purging away their iniquities, their dross, and their sin; but there is nothing so effectually cleanses from sin as the blood of Jesus, or heals or cures of it as his blue wounds and stripes; (see ^{<3370>}Isaiah 27:9 53:5);

so [do] stripes the inward part of the belly; or heart and conscience; by means of corrections and chastisement men are brought to an inward sense of sin; they are shown their transgressions wherein they have exceeded, and

are commanded to return from iniquity, (~~3830~~ Job 36:9,10); they lament and mourn over sin, confess it and forsake it; and then may the inwards of the heart, the mind and conscience, defiled with them, be said to be cleansed from them; especially when led by these stripes and corrections to the stripes, wounds, and blood of Christ which, being applied, cleanse from all, sin inwardly and outwardly.