

# CHAPTER 3

Solomon having shown the vanity of studies, pleasures, and business, and made it to appear that happiness is not to be found in the schools of the learned, nor in the gardens of Epicurus, nor upon the exchange, he proceeds, in this chapter, further to prove his doctrine, and the inference he had drawn from it, That therefore we should cheerfully content ourselves with, and make use of, what God has given us, by showing,

**I.** The mutability of all human affairs (v. 1-10).

**II.** The immutability of the divine counsels concerning them and the unsearchableness of those counsels (v. 11-15).

**III.** The vanity of worldly honour and power, which are abused for the support of oppression and persecution if men be not governed by the fear of God in the use of them (v. 16). For a check to proud oppressors, and to show them their vanity, he reminds them,

1. That they will be called to account for it in the other world (v. 17).
2. That their condition, in reference to this world (for of that he speaks), is no better than that of the beasts (v. 18-21). And therefore he concludes that it is our wisdom to make use of what power we have for our own comfort, and not to oppress others with it.

## ECCLESIASTES 3:1-10

### MUTABILITY OF HUMAN AFFAIRS

The scope of these verses is to show,

1. That we live in a world of changes, that the several events of time, and conditions of human life, are vastly different from one another, and yet occur promiscuously, and we are continually passing and repassing between them, as in the revolutions of every day and every year. In the *wheel of nature* (<sup>306</sup>James 3:6) sometimes one spoke is uppermost and by and by the contrary; there is a constant ebbing and flowing, waxing and

waning; from one extreme to the other does the *fashion of this world change*, ever did, and ever will.

**2.** That every change concerning us, with the time and season of it, is unalterably fixed and determined by a supreme power; and we must take things as they come, for it is not in our power to change what is appointed for us. And this comes in here as a reason why, when we are in prosperity, we should be easy, and yet not secure — not to be secure because we live in a world of changes and therefore have no reason to say, *To-morrow shall be as this day* (the lowest valleys join to the highest mountains), and yet to be easy, and, as he had advised (<sup><2024></sup>Ecclesiastes 2:24), *to enjoy the good of our labour*, in a humble dependence upon God and his providence, neither lifted up with hopes, nor cast down with fears, but with evenness of mind expecting every event. Here we have,

**I.** A general proposition laid down: *To every thing there is a season*, v. 1.

**1.** Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other will, in the revolution of affairs, each take their turn and come into play. The day will give place to the night and the night again to the day. Is it summer? It will be winter. Is it winter? Stay a while, and it will be summer. Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded, *Post gaudia luctus* — *Joy succeeds sorrow*; and the most clouded sky will clear up, *Post nubila Phoebus* — *The sun will burst from behind the cloud*.

**2.** Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent are, in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, punctually determined, and the very hour of them is fixed, and can neither be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.

**II.** The proof and illustration of it by the induction of particulars, twenty-eight in number, according to the days of the moon's revolution, which is always increasing or decreasing between its full and change. Some of these changes are purely the act of God, others depend more upon the will of man, but all are determined by the divine counsel. Every thing *under heaven* is thus changeable, but in heaven there is an unchangeable state, and an unchangeable counsel concerning these things.

**1.** There is *a time to be born and a time to die*. These are determined by the divine counsel; and, as we were born, so we must die, at the time appointed, <sup><4175></sup>Acts 17:26. Some observe that here is *a time to be born and*

*a time to die*, but no time to live; that is so short that it is not worth mentioning; as soon as we are born we begin to die. But, as there is *a time to be born and a time to die*, so there will be a time to rise again, a set time when those that lie in the grave shall be remembered, <sup><3413></sup>Job 14:13.

**2.** A *time* for God *to plant* a nation, as that of Israel in Canaan, *and*, in order to that, *to pluck up* the seven nations *that were planted* there, to make room for them; and at length there was a time when God spoke concerning Israel too, *to pluck up and to destroy*, when the measure of their iniquity was full, <sup><2147></sup>Jeremiah 18:7, 9. There is *a time* for men *to plant*, a time of the year, a time of their lives; but, when *that which was planted* has grown fruitless and useless, it is *time to pluck it up*.

**3.** A *time to kill*, when the judgments of God are abroad in a land and lay all waste; but, when he returns in ways of mercy, then is *a time to heal* what *he has torn* (<sup><2361></sup>Hosea 6:1, 2), to comfort a people after the time that he has *afflicted them*, <sup><3915></sup>Psalm 90:15. There is a time when it is the wisdom of rulers to use severe methods, but there is a time when it is as much their wisdom to take a more gentle course, and to apply themselves to lenitives, not corrosives.

**4.** A *time to break down* a family, an estate, a kingdom, when it has ripened itself for destruction; but God will find *a time*, if they return and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down; there is *a time*, a set time, for the Lord *to build up Zion*, <sup><1923></sup>Psalm 102:13, 16. There is *a time* for men *to break up* house, and break off trade, and so *to break down*, which those that are busy in *building up* both must expect and prepare for.

**5.** A *time* when God's providence calls *to weep and mourn*, and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call, and will *weep and mourn*, as in times of common calamity and danger, and there it is very absurd to *laugh, and dance*, and make merry (<sup><2320></sup>Isaiah 22:12, 13; <sup><3210></sup>Ezekiel 21:10); but then, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, *a time to laugh and dance*, and then he expects we should *serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart*. Observe, The time of mourning and weeping is put first, before that of laughter and dancing, for we must first *sow in tears* and then *reap in joy*.

**6.** A *time to cast away stones*, by breaking down and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, and there is no more occasion for them; but there is *a time to gather stones together*, for the making of strong-holds, v. 5. A time for old towers to fall, as that in

Siloam (~~404~~ Luke 12:4), and for the temple itself to be so ruined as that *not one stone should be left upon another*; but also a time for towers and trophies too to be erected, when national affairs prosper.

**7.** *A time to embrace* a friend when we find him faithful, but *a time to refrain from embracing* when we find he is unfair or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect him; it is then our prudence to be shy and keep at a distance. It is commonly applied to conjugal embraces, and explained by ~~405~~ 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; ~~406~~ Joel 2:16.

**8.** *A time to get*, get money, get preferment, get good bargains and a good interest, when opportunity smiles, a time when a wise man will *seek* (so the word is); when he is setting out in the world and has a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he prospers and has a run of business, then it is time for him to be busy and make hay when the sun shines. There is *a time to get* wisdom, and knowledge, and grace, when a man has a price put into his hand; but then let him expect there will come a time to spend, when all he has will be little enough to serve his turn. Nay, there will come *a time to lose*, when what has been soon got will be soon scattered and cannot be held fast.

**9.** *A time to keep*, when we have use for what we have got, and can keep it without running the hazard of a good conscience; but there may come *a time to cast away*, when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ and wrong our consciences if we keep it (~~407~~ Matthew 10:37, 38), and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; nay, when love to ourselves may oblige us to cast it away, when it is for the saving of our lives, as it was when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea.

**10.** *A time to rend* the garments, as upon occasion of some great grief, *and a time to sew*, them again, in token that the grief is over. A time to undo what we have done and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerome applies this to the rending of the Jewish church and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon.

**11.** *A time* when it becomes us, and is our wisdom and duty, *to keep silence*, when it is an *evil time* (~~408~~ Amos 5:13), when our speaking would be the *casting of pearl before swine*, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss (~~409~~ Psalm 39:2); but there is also *a time to speak* for the glory of God and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of

a righteous cause, and when with the mouth confession is to be made to salvation; and it is a great part of Christian prudence to know when to speak and when to hold our peace.

**12.** *A time to love*, and to show ourselves friendly, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come *a time to hate*, when we shall see cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for a suspicion, which love is loth to admit.

**13.** *A time of war*, when God draws the sword for judgment and gives it commission to devour, when men draw the sword for justice and the maintaining of their rights, when there is in the nations a disposition to war; but we may hope for *a time of peace*, when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed and he shall *make wars to cease* (~~PS~~ Psalm 46:9), when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God has set the one over-against the other, that we may *rejoice as though we rejoiced not and weep as though we wept not*.

**III.** The inferences drawn from this observation. If our present state be subject to such vicissitude,

**1.** Then we must not expect our portion in it, for the good things of it are of no certainty, no continuance (v. 9): *What profit has he that works?* What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks is brought to perfection may so soon, and will so surely, be plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves or the immutable counsel of God concerning them.

**2.** Then we must look upon ourselves as upon our probation in it. There is indeed no profit *in that wherein we labour*; the thing itself, when we have it, will do us little good; but, if we make a right use of the disposals of Providence about it, there will be profit in that (v. 10): *I have seen the travail which God has given to the sons of men*, not to make up a happiness by it, but *to be exercised in it*, to have various graces exercised by the variety of events, to have their dependence upon God tried by every change, and to be trained up to it, and taught both *how to want and how to abound*, ~~PH~~ Philippians 4:12. Note,

(1.) There is a great deal of toil and trouble to be seen among the children of men. Labour and sorrow fill the world.

(2.) This toil and this trouble are what God has allotted us. He never intended this world for our rest, and therefore never appointed us to take our ease in it.

(3.) To many it proves a gift. God gives it to men, as the physician gives a medicine to his patient, to do him good. This travail is given to us to make us weary of the world and desirous of the remaining rest. It is given to us that we may be kept in action, and may always have something to do; for we were none of us sent into the world to be idle. Every change cuts us out some new work, which we should be more solicitous about, than about the event.

## ECCLESIASTES 3:11-15

### IMMUTABILITY OF GOD'S COUNSEL

We have seen what changes there are in the world, and must not expect to find the world more sure to us than it has been to others. Now here Solomon shows the hand of God in all those changes; it is he that has made every creature to be that to us which it is, and therefore we must have our eye always upon him.

**I.** We must make the best of *that which is*, and must believe it best for the present, and accommodate ourselves to it: *He has made every thing beautiful in his time* (v. 11), and therefore, while its time lasts, we must be reconciled to it: nay, we must please ourselves with the beauty of it. Note,

**1.** Every thing is as God has made it; it is really as he appointed it to be, not as it appears to us.

**2.** That which to us seems most unpleasant is yet, in its proper time, altogether becoming. Cold is as becoming in winter as heat in summer; and the night, in its turn, is a black beauty, as the day, in its turn, is a bright one.

**3.** There is a wonderful harmony in the divine Providence and all its disposals, so that the events of it, when they come to be considered in their

relations and tendencies, together with the seasons of them, will appear very beautiful, to the glory of God and the comfort of those that trust in him. Though we see not the complete beauty of Providence, yet we shall see it, and a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished. Then every thing shall appear to have been done in the most proper time and it will be the wonder of eternity, <sup>(53)</sup>Deuteronomy 32:4. <sup>(54)</sup>Ezekiel 1:18.

**II.** We must wait with patience for the full discovery of that which to us seems intricate and perplexed, acknowledging that we *cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end*, and therefore must judge nothing before the time. We are to believe that God has made all beautiful. Every thing is done well, as in creation, so in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes, but till then we are incompetent judges of it. While the picture is in drawing, and the house in building, we see not the beauty of either; but when the artist has put his last hand to them, and given them their finishing strokes, then all appears very good. We see but the middle of God's works, not from the beginning of them (then we should see how admirably the plan was laid in the divine counsels), nor to the end of them, which crowns the action (then we should see the product to be glorious), but we must wait till the veil be rent, and not arraign God's proceedings nor pretend to pass judgment on them. *Secret things belong not to us*. Those words, *He has set the world in their hearts*, are differently understood.

**1.** Some make them to be a reason why we may know more of God's works than we do; so Mr. Pemble: "God has not left himself without witness of his righteous, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, but has set it forth, to be observed in the book of *the world*, and this he has *set in men's hearts*, given man a large desire, and a power, in good measure, to comprehend and understand the history of nature, with the course of human affairs, so that, if men did but give themselves to the exact observation of things, they might in most of them perceive an admirable order and contrivance."

**2.** Others make them to be a reason why we do not know so much of God's works as we might; so bishop Reynolds: "We have the world so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised in our travail concerning them, that we have neither time nor spirit to eye God's hand in them." The world has not only gained

possession of the heart, but has formed prejudices there against the beauty of God's works.

**III.** We must be pleased with our lot in this world, and cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God concerning us, and accommodate ourselves to it. *There is no certain, lasting, good in these things*; what good there is in them we are here told, v. 12, 13. We must make a good use of them,

**1.** For the benefit of others. All the *good there is in them is to do good* with them, to our families, to our neighbours, to the poor, to the public, to its civil and religious interests. What have we our beings, capacities, and estates for, but to be some way serviceable to our generation? We mistake if we think we were born for ourselves. No; it is our business *to do good*; it is in doing good that there is the truest pleasure, and what is so laid out is best laid up and will turn to the best account. Observe, It is *to do good in this life*, which is short and uncertain; we have but a little time to be doing good in, and therefore had need to redeem time. It is *in this life*, where we are in a state of trial and probation for another life. Every man's life is his opportunity of doing that which will make for him in eternity.

**2.** For our own comfort. Let us make ourselves easy, *rejoice, and enjoy the good of our labour, as it is the gift of God*, and so enjoy God in it, and taste his love, return him thanks, and make him the centre of our joy, *eat and drink to his glory, and serve him with joyfulness of heart, in the abundance of all things*. If all things in this world be so uncertain, it is a foolish thing for men sordidly to spare for the present, that they may hoard up all for hereafter; it is better to live cheerfully and usefully upon what we have, and let to-morrow *take thought for the things of itself*. Grace and wisdom to do this *is the gift of God*, and it is a good gift, which crowns the gifts of his providential bounty.

**IV.** We must be entirely satisfied in all the disposals of the divine Providence, both as to personal and public concerns, and bring our minds to them, because God, in all, performs the thing that is appointed for us, acts according to the counsel of his will; and we are here told,

**1.** That that counsel cannot be altered, and therefore it is our wisdom to make a virtue of necessity, by submitting to it. It must be as God wills: *I know* (and every one knows it that knows any thing of God) *that whatsoever God does it shall be for ever*, v. 14. *He is in one mind, and who can turn him?* His measures are never broken, nor is he ever put upon



new counsels, but what he has purposed shall be effected, and all the world cannot defeat nor disannul it. It behoves us therefore to say, "Let it be as God wills," for, how cross soever it may be to our designs and interests, God's will is his wisdom.

2. That that counsel needs not to be altered, for there is nothing amiss in it, nothing that can be amended. If we could see it altogether at one view, we should see it so perfect that *nothing can be put to it*, for there is no deficiency in it, *nor any thing taken from it*, for there is nothing in it unnecessary, or that can be spared. As the word of God, so the works of God are every one of them perfect in its kind, and it is presumption for us either to add to them or to diminish from them, ~~ROM~~ Deuteronomy 4:2. It is therefore as much our interest, as our duty, to bring our wills to the will of God.

V. We must study to answer God's end in all his providences, which is in general to make us religious. *God does all that men should fear before him*, to convince them that there is a God above them that has a sovereign dominion over them, at whose disposal they are and all their ways, and in whose hands their times are and all events concerning them, and that therefore they ought to have their eyes ever towards him, to worship and adore him, to acknowledge him in all their ways, to be careful in every thing to please him, and afraid of offending him in any thing. God thus changes his disposals, and yet is unchangeable in his counsels, not to perplex us, much less to drive us to despair, but to teach us our duty to him and engage us to do it. That which God designs in the government of the world is the support and advancement of religion among men.

VI. Whatever changes we see or feel in this world, we must acknowledge the inviolable steadiness of God's government. The sun rises and sets, the moon increases and decreases, and yet both are where they were, and their revolutions are in the same method from the beginning according to *the ordinances of heaven*; so it is with the events of Providence (v. 15): *That which has been is now*. God has not of late begun to use this method. No; things were always as mutable and uncertain as they are now, and so they will be: *That which is to be has already been*; and therefore we speak inconsiderately when we say, "Surely the world was never so bad as it is now," or "None ever met with such disappointments as we meet with," or "The times will never mend;" they may mend with us, and after a time to mourn there may come a time to rejoice, but that will still be liable to the

common character, to the common fate. The world, as it has been, is and will be constant in inconstancy; for *God requires that which is past*, that is, repeats what he has formerly done and deals with us no otherwise than as he has used to deal with good men; and *shall the earth be forsaken for us, or the rock removed out of his place?* There has no change befallen us, nor any temptation by it overtaken us, *but such as is common to men*. Let us not be proud and secure in prosperity, for God may recall a past trouble, and order that to seize us and spoil our mirth (~~30:7~~ Psalm 30:7); nor let us despond in adversity, for God may call back the comforts that are past, as he did to Job. We may apply this to our past actions, and our behaviour under the changes that have affected us. God will call us to account for *that which is past*; and therefore, when we enter into a new condition, we should judge ourselves for our sins in our former condition, prosperous or afflicted.

## ~~2186~~ ECCLESIASTES 3:16-22

### THE EXTENT OF MORTALITY

Solomon is still showing that every thing in this world, without piety and the fear of God, is vanity. Take away religion, and there is nothing valuable among men, nothing for the sake of which a wise man would think it worth while to live in this world. In these verses he shows that power (than which there is nothing men are more ambitious of) and life itself (than which there is nothing men are more fond, more jealous of) are nothing without the fear of God.

**I.** Here is the vanity of man as mighty, man in his best estate, man upon the throne, where his authority is submitted to, man upon the judgment-seat, where his wisdom and justice are appealed to, and where, if he be governed by the laws of religion, he is God's vicegerent; nay, he is of those to whom it is said, *You are gods*; but without the fear of God it *is vanity*, for, set that aside, and,

**1.** The judge will not judge aright, will not use his power well, but will abuse it; instead of doing good with it he will do hurt with it, and then it is not only vanity, but a lie, a cheat to himself and to all about him, v. 16. Solomon perceived, by what he had read of former times, what he heard of other countries, and what he had seen in some corrupt judges, even in the

land of Israel, notwithstanding all his care to prefer good men, that there was *wickedness in the place of judgment*. It is not so above the sun: far be it from God that he should do iniquity, or pervert justice. But *under the sun* it is often found that that which should be the refuge, proves the prison, of oppressed innocency. *Man being in honour, and not understanding* what he ought to do, *becomes like the beasts that perish*, like the beasts of prey, even the most ravenous, <sup><1941></sup>Psalm 49:20. Not only from the persons that sat in judgment, but even *in the places* where judgment was, in pretence, administered, and righteousness was expected, *there was iniquity*; men met with the greatest wrongs in those courts to which they fled for justice. This is *vanity and vexation*; for,

(1.) It would have been better for the people to have had no judges than to have had such.

(2.) It would have been better for the judges to have had no power than to have had it and used it to such ill purposes; and so they will say another day.

2. The judge will himself be judged for not judging aright. When Solomon saw how judgment was perverted among men he looked up to God the Judge, and looked forward to the day of his judgment (v. 17): "*I said in my heart* that this unrighteous judgment is not so conclusive as both sides take it to be, for there will be a review of the judgment; *God shall judge between the righteous and the wicked*, shall judge for the righteous and plead their cause, though now it is run down, and judge against the wicked and reckon with them for all their *unrighteous decrees* and the *grievousness which they have prescribed*," <sup><2301></sup>Isaiah 10:1. With an eye of faith we may see, not only the period, but the punishment of the pride and cruelty of oppressors (<sup><1921></sup>Psalm 92:7), and it is an unspeakable comfort to the oppressed that their cause will be heard over again. Let them therefore wait with patience, for there is another *Judge* that *stands before the door*. And, though the day of affliction may last long, yet *there is a time*, a set time, for the examination of *every purpose, and every work* done under the sun. Men have their day now, but God's day is coming, <sup><1973></sup>Psalm 37:13. With God *there is a time* for the re-hearing of causes, redressing of grievances, and reversing of unjust decrees, though as yet we see it not here, <sup><1921></sup>Job 24:1.

II. Here is the vanity of man as mortal. He now comes to speak more generally *concerning the estate of the sons of men* in this world, their life

and being on earth, and shows that their reason, without religion and the fear of God, advances them but little above the beasts. Now observe,

**1.** What he aims at in this account of man's estate.

**(1.)** That God may be honoured, may be justified, may be glorified — *that they might clear God* (so the margin reads it), that if men have an uneasy life in this world, full of vanity and vexation, they may thank themselves and lay no blame on God; let them clear him, and not say that he made this world to be man's prison and life to be his penance; no, God made man, in respect both of honour and comfort, *little lower than the angels*; if he be mean and miserable, it is his own fault. Or, *that God* (that is, the world of God) *might manifest them*, and discover them to themselves, and so appear to be *quick and powerful*, and a judge of men's characters; and we may be made sensible how open we lie to God's knowledge and judgment.

**(2.)** That men may be humbled, may be vilified, may be mortified — *that they might see that they themselves are beasts*. It is no easy matter to convince proud men that *they are but men* (~~198B~~ Psalm 9:20), much more to convince bad men *that they are beasts*, that, being destitute of religion, they are as *the beasts that perish*, as *the horse and the mule that have no understanding*. Proud oppressors are as beasts, as *roaring lions and ranging bears*. Nay, every man that minds his body only, and not his soul, makes himself no better than a brute, and must wish, at least, to die like one.

**2.** The manner in which he verifies this account. That which he undertakes to prove is that a worldly, carnal, earthly-minded *man, has no preeminence above the beast, for all that which he sets his heart upon, places his confidence, and expects a happiness in, is vanity*, v. 19. Some make this to be the language of an atheist, who justifies himself in his iniquity (v. 16) and evades the argument taken from the judgment to come (v. 17) by pleading that there is not another life after this, but that when man dies there is an end of him, and therefore while he lives he may live as he lists; but others rather think Solomon here speaks as he himself thinks, and that it is to be understood in the same sense with that of his father (~~198B~~ Psalm 49:14), *Like sheep they are laid in the grave*, and that he intends to show the vanity of this world's wealth and honours “By the equal condition in mere outward respects (as bishop Reynolds expounds it) between men and beasts,”

(1.) The events concerning both seem much alike (v. 19); *That which befalls the sons of men* is no other than that which *befalls beasts*; a great deal of knowledge of human bodies is gained by the anatomy of the bodies of brutes. When the deluge swept away the old world the beasts perished with mankind. Horses and men are killed in battle with the same weapons of war.

(2.) The end of both, to an eye of sense, seems alike too: *They have all one breath*, and breathe in the same air, and it is the general description of both that *in their nostrils is the breath of life* (<sup>4072</sup>Genesis 7:22), and therefore, *as the one dies, so dies the other*; in their expiring there is no visible difference, but death makes much the same change with a beast that it does with a man.

[1.] As to their bodies, the change is altogether the same, except the different respects that are paid to them by the survivors. Let a man be *buried with the burial of an ass* (<sup>4279</sup>Jeremiah 22:19) and what pre%omnience then has he *above a beast*? The touch of the dead body of a man, by the law of Moses, contracted a greater ceremonial pollution than the touch of the carcase even of an unclean beast or fowl. And Solomon here observes that *all go unto one place*; the dead bodies of men and beasts putrefy alike; *all are of the dust*, in their original, for we see *all turn to dust again* in their corruption. What little reason then have we to be proud of our bodies, or any bodily accomplishments, when they must not only be reduced to the earth very shortly, but must be so in common with the beasts, and we must mingle our dust with theirs!

[2.] As to their spirits there is indeed a vast difference, but not a visible one, v. 21. It is certain that *the spirit of the sons of men* at death is ascending; it *goes upwards* to the Father of spirits, who made it, to the world of spirits to which it is allied; it dies not with the body, but *is redeemed from the power of the grave*, <sup>4905</sup>Psalm 49:15. It *goes upwards* to be judged and determined to an unchangeable state. It is certain that *the spirit of the beast goes downwards to the earth*; it dies with the body; it perishes and is gone at death. The soul of a beast is, at death, like a candle blown out — there is an end of it; whereas the soul of a man is then like a candle taken out of a dark lantern, which leaves the lantern useless indeed, but does itself shine brighter. This great difference there is between the spirits of men and beasts; and a good reason it is why men should *set their affections on things above*, and lift up their souls to those things, not

suffering them, as if they were the souls of brutes, to cleave to this earth. But *who knows* this difference? We cannot see the ascent of the one and the descent of the other with our bodily eyes; and therefore those that live by sense, as all carnal sensualists do, that *walk in the sight of their eyes* and will not admit any other discoveries, by their own rule of judgment have no *pre%ominence above the beasts*. *Who knows*, that is, who considers this? <sup><2511></sup>Isaiah 53:1. Very few. Were it better considered, the world would be every way better; but most men live as if they were to be here always, or as if when they die there were an end of them; and it is not strange that those live like beasts who think they shall die like beasts, but on such the noble faculties of reason are perfectly lost and thrown away.

**3.** An inference drawn from it (v. 22): *There is nothing better*, as to this world, nothing better to be had out of our wealth and honour, *than that a man should rejoice in his own works*, that is,

**(1.)** Keep a clear conscience, and never admit *iniquity into the place of righteousness*. *Let every man prove his own work*, and approve himself to God in it, *so shall he have rejoicing in himself alone*, <sup><8104></sup>Galatians 6:4. Let him not get nor keep any thing but what he can rejoice in. See <sup><8112></sup>2 Corinthians 1:12.

**(2.)** Live a cheerful life. If God have prospered the work of our hands unto us, let us rejoice in it, and take the comfort of it, and not make it a burden to ourselves and leave others the joy of it; *for that is our portion*, not the portion of our souls (miserable are those that have their portion in this life, <sup><8174></sup>Psalms 17:14, and fools are those that choose it and take up with it, <sup><8129></sup>Luke 12:19), but it is the portion of the body; that only which we enjoy is ours out of this world; it is taking what is to be had and making the best of it, and the reason is because none can give us a sight of *what shall be after us*, either who shall have our estates or what use they will make of them. When we are gone it is likely we shall not see what is after us; there is no correspondence that we know of between the other world and this, <sup><8141></sup>Job 14:21. Those in the other world will be wholly taken up with that world, so that they will not care for seeing what is done in this; and while we are here we cannot foresee *what shall be after us*, either as to our families or the public. *It is not for us to know the times and seasons that shall be after us*, which, as it should be a restraint to our cares about this world, so it should be a reason for our concern about another. Since death is a final farewell to this life, let us look before us to another life.