

CHAPTER 24

~~241~~ PROVERBS 24:1-2

CAUTION AGAINST ENVY

Here,

1. The caution given is much the same with that which we had before (~~237~~Proverbs 23:17), not to envy sinners, not to think them happy, nor to wish ourselves in their condition, though they prosper ever so much in this world, and are ever so marry and ever so secure. “Let not such a thought ever come into thy mind, O that I could shake off the restraints of religion and conscience, and take as great a liberty to indulge the sensual appetite, as I see such and such do! No; *desire not to be with them*, to do as they do and fare as they fare, and to *cast in thy lot among them*.”

2. Here is another reason given for this caution: “*Be not envious against them*, not only because their end will be had, but because their way is so, v. 2. Do not think with them, *for their heart studies destruction* to others, but it will prove destruction to themselves. Do not speak like them, for *their lips talk of their mischief*. All they say has an ill tendency, to dishonour God, reproach religion, or wrong their neighbour; but it will be mischief to themselves at last. It is therefore thy wisdom to have nothing to do with them. Nor hast thou any reason to look upon them with envy, but with pity rather, or a just indignation at their wicked practices.”

~~243~~ PROVERBS 24:3-6

THE EXCELLENCE OF WISDOM

We are tempted to envy those that grow rich, and raise their estates and families, by such unjust courses as our consciences will by no means suffer us to use. But, to set aside that temptation, Solomon here shows that a man, with prudent management, may raise his estate and family by lawful and honest means, with a good conscience, and a good name, and

the blessing of God upon his industry; and, if the other be raised a little sooner, yet these will last a great deal longer.

1. That which is here recommended to us as having the best influence upon our outward prosperity is *wisdom*, and *understanding*, and *knowledge*; that is, both piety towards God (for that is true wisdom) and prudence in the management of our outward affairs. We must govern ourselves in every thing by the rules of religion first and then of discretion. Some that are truly pious do not thrive in the world, for want of prudence; and some that are prudent enough, yet do not prosper, because they lean to their own understanding and do not acknowledge God in their ways; therefore both must go together to complete a wise man.

2. That which is here set before us as the advantage of true wisdom is that it will make men's outward affairs prosperous and successful.

(1.) it will *build a house and establish it*, v. 3. Men may by unrighteous practices build their houses, but they cannot establish them, for the foundation is rotten (^{<300>}Habakkuk 2:9, 10); whereas what is honestly got will wear like steel and be an inheritance to children's children.

(2.) It will enrich a house and furnish it, v. 4. Those that manage their affairs with wisdom and equity, that are diligent in the use of lawful means for increasing what they have that spare from luxury and spend in charity, are in a fair way to have their shops, their warehouses, their *chambers*, *filled with all precious and pleasant riches* — *precious* because got by honest labour, and *the substance of a diligent man is precious* — *pleasant* because enjoyed with holy cheerfulness. Some think this is to be understood chiefly of spiritual riches. *By knowledge the chambers* of the soul are filled with the graces and comforts of the Spirit, those *precious and pleasant riches*; for the Spirit, by enlightening the understanding, performs all his other operations on the soul.

(3.) It will fortify a house and turn it into a castle: *Wisdom is better than weapons of war*, offensive or defensive. *A wise man is in strength*, is in a strong-hold, *yea, a man of knowledge strengthens might*, that is, increases it, v. 5. As we grow in knowledge we grow in all grace, ^{<600>}2 Peter 3:18. Those that *increase in wisdom* are *strengthened with all might*, ^{<500>}Colossians 1:9, 11. A wise man will compass that by his wisdom which a strong man cannot effect by force of arms. The spirit is strengthened both for the spiritual work and the spiritual warfare by true wisdom.

(4.) It will govern a house and a kingdom too, and the affairs of both, v. 6. Wisdom will erect a college, or council of state. Wisdom will be of use,

[1.] For the managing of the public quarrels, so as not to engage in them but for an honest cause and with some probability of success, and, when they are engaged in, to manage them well, and so as to make either an advantageous peace or an honourable retreat: *By wise counsel thou shalt make war*, which is a thing that may prove of ill consequence if not done by wise counsel.

[2.] For the securing of the public peace: *In the multitude of counsellors there is safety*, for one may foresee the danger, and discern the advantages, which another cannot. In our spiritual conflicts we need wisdom, for our enemy is subtle.

~~THE~~ PROVERBS 24:7-9

THE MALICIOUS AND THE SCORNFUL

Here is the description,

1. Of a weak man: *Wisdom is too high* for him; he thinks it so, and therefore, despairing to attain it, he will take no pains in the pursuit of it, but sit down content without it. And really it is so; he has not capacity for it, and therefore the advantages he has for getting it are all in vain to him. It is no easy thing to get wisdom; those that have natural parts good enough, yet if they be foolish, that is, if they be slothful and will not take pains, if they be playful and trifling, and given to their pleasures, if they be viciously inclined and keep bad company, it *is too high* for them; they are not likely to reach it. And, for want of it, they are unfit for the service of their country: *They open not their mouth in the gate*; they are not admitted into the council or magistracy, or, if they are, they are dumb statues, and stand for cyphers; they say nothing, because they have nothing to say, and they know that if they should offer any thing it would not be heeded, nay, it would be hissed at. Let young men take pains to get wisdom, that they may be qualified for public business, and do it with reputation.

2. Of a wicked man, who is not only despised as a fool is, but detested. Two sorts of wicked men are so: —

(1.) Such as are secretly malicious. Though they speak courteously and conduct themselves plausibly, they *devise to do evil*, are contriving to do an ill turn to those they bear a grudge to, or have an envious eye at. He that does so *shall be called a mischievous person, or a master of mischief*, which perhaps was then a common name of reproach; he shall be branded as an *inventor of evil things* (Romans 1. 30), or if any mischief be done, he shall be suspected as the author of it, or at least accessory to it. This *devising evil is the thought of foolishness*, v. 9. It is made light of, and turned off with a jest, as only a foolish thing, but really it *is sin*, it is exceedingly sinful; you cannot call it by a worse name than to call it *sin*. It is bad to do evil, but it is worse to devise it; for that has in it the subtlety and poison of the old serpent. But it may be taken more generally. We contract guilt, not only by the act of foolishness, but by the thought of it, though it go no further; the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, offensive to God, and must be repented of or we are undone. Not only malicious, unclean, proud thoughts, but even foolish thoughts, are sinful thoughts. If *vain thoughts lodge in the heart*, they defile it (~~2044~~Jeremiah 4:14), which is a reason why we should *keep our hearts with all diligence*, and harbour no thoughts there which cannot give a good account of themselves, ~~0065~~Genesis 6:5.

(2.) Such as are openly abusive: *The scorner*, who gives ill-language to every body, takes a pleasure in affronting people and reflecting upon them, *is an abomination to men*; none that have any sense of honour and virtue will care to keep company with him. *The seat of the scornful* is the *pestilential chair* (as the Septuagint calls it, ~~800~~Psalm 1:1), which no wise man will come near, for fear of taking the infection. Those that strive to make others odious do but make themselves so.

~~220~~PROVERBS 24:10

CAUTIONS AGAINST COWARDICE

Note,

1. In *the day of adversity* we are apt to *faint*, to droop and be discouraged, to desist from our work, and to despair of relief. Our spirits sink, and then our hands hang down and our knees grow feeble, and we become unfit for

anything. And often those that are most cheerful when they are well droop most, and are most dejected, when any thing ails them.

2. This is an evidence that our *strength is small*, and is a means of weakening it more. “It is a sign that thou art not a man of any resolution, any firmness of thought, any consideration, any faith (for that is the strength of a soul), if thou canst not bear up under an afflictive change of thy condition.” Some are so feeble that they can bear nothing; if a trouble does but *touch* them (^{<3045>}Job 4:5), nay, if it does but threaten them, they faint immediately and are ready to give up all for gone; and by this means they render themselves unfit to grapple with their trouble and unable to help themselves. *Be of good courage therefore, and God shall strengthen thy heart.*

<2411> PROVERBS 24:11-12

CAUTIONS AGAINST COWARDICE

Here is,

1. A great duty required of us, and that is to appear for the relief of oppressed innocency. If we see the lives or livelihoods of any in danger of being taken away unjustly, we ought to bestir ourselves all we can to save them, by disproving the false accusations on which they are condemned and seeking out proofs of their innocency. Though the persons be not such as we are under any particular obligation to, we must help them, out of a general zeal for justice. If any be set upon by force and violence, and it be in our power to rescue them, we ought to do it. Nay, if we see any through ignorance exposing themselves to danger, or fallen in distress, as travellers upon the road, ships at sea, or any the like, it is our duty, though it be with peril to ourselves, to hasten with help to them and not *forbear to deliver them*, not to be slack, or remiss, or indifferent, in such a case.

2. An answer to the excuse that is commonly make for the omission of this duty. Thou wilt say, “*Behold, we knew it not; we were not aware of the imminency of the danger the person was in; we could not be sure that he was innocent, nor did we know how to prove his innocence, nor which way to do any thing in favour of him, else we would have helped him.*”
Now,

(1.) It is easy to make such an excuse as this, sufficient to avoid the censures of men, for perhaps they cannot disprove us when we say, *We knew it not*, or, *We forgot*; and the temptation to tell a lie for the excusing of a fault is very strong when we know that it is impossible to be disproved, the truth lying wholly in our own breast, as when we say, *We thought so and so, and really designed it*, which no one is conscious of but ourselves.

(2.) It is not so easy with such excuses to evade the judgment of God; and to the discovery of that we lie open and by the determination of that we must abide. Now,

[1.] God *ponders the heart and keeps the soul*; he keeps an eye upon it, observes all the motions of it; its most secret thoughts and intents are all naked and open before him. It is his prerogative to do so, and that in which he glories. ²⁴⁷⁰Jeremiah 17:10, *I the Lord search the heart. He keeps the soul*, holds it in life. This is a good reason why we should be tender of the lives of others, and do all we can to preserve them, because our lives have been precious in the sight of God and he has graciously kept them.

[2.] He knows and considers whether the excuse we make be true or no, whether it was because we did not know it or whether the true reason was not because we did not love our neighbour as we ought, but were selfish, and regardless both of God and man. Let this serve to silence all our frivolous pleas, by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience when it charges us with the omission of plain duty: *Does not he that ponders the heart consider it?*

[3.] He will judge us accordingly. As his knowledge cannot be imposed upon, so his justice cannot be biased, but he will *render to every man according to his works*, not only the commission of evil works, but the omission of good works.

PROVERBS 24:13-14

PLEASURES AND ADVANTAGES OF WISDOM

We are here quickened to the study of wisdom by the consideration both of the pleasure and the profit of it.

1. It will be very pleasant. We *eat honey because it is sweet to the taste*, and upon that account we call it *good*, especially that which runs first from the *honey-comb*. Canaan was said to flow with milk and honey, and honey was the common food of the country (^{<4244>}Luke 24:41, 42), even for children, ^{<3715>}Isaiah 7:15. Thus should we feed upon wisdom, and relish the good instructions of it. Those that have tasted honey need no further proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary; so those that have experienced the power of truth and godliness are abundantly satisfied of the pleasure of both; they have tasted the sweetness of them, and all the atheists in the world with their sophistry, and the profane with their banter, cannot alter their sentiments.

2. It will be very profitable. Honey may be *sweet to the taste* and yet not wholesome, but wisdom has a future recompence attending it, as well as a present sweetness in it. “Thou art permitted to *eat honey*, and the agreeableness of it to thy taste invites thee to it; but thou hast much more reason to relish and digest the precepts *of wisdom*, for *when thou hast found that, there shall be a reward*; thou shalt be paid for thy pleasure, while the servants of sin pay dearly for their pains. Wisdom does indeed set thee to work, but *there shall be a reward*; it does indeed raise great expectations in thee, but as thy labour, so thy hope, shall not be in vain; *thy expectation shall not be cut off* (^{<3238>}Proverbs 23:18), nay, it shall be infinitely outdone.”

^{<1215>}PROVERBS 24:15-16

CAUTIONS AGAINST ENVY

This is spoken, not so much by way of counsel to wicked men (they will not receive instruction, ^{<1219>}Proverbs 23:9), but rather in defiance of them, for the encouragement of good people that are threatened by them. See here,

1. The designs of the wicked against the righteous, and the success they promise themselves in those designs. The plot is laid deeply: They *lay wait against the dwelling of the righteous*, thinking to charge some iniquity upon it, or compass some design against it; they lie in wait at the door, to catch him when he stirs out, as David's persecutors, Psalm 59 *title*. The hope is raised high; they doubt not but to *spoil his dwelling-*

place because he is weak and cannot support it, because his condition is low and distressed, and he is almost down already. All this is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright.*

2. The folly and frustration of these designs

(1.) The righteous man, whose ruin was expected, recovers himself. He *falls seven times* into trouble, but, by the blessing of God upon his wisdom and integrity, he *rises again*, sees through his troubles and sees better times after them. The *just man falls*, sometimes *falls seven times* perhaps, into sin, sins of infirmity, through the surprise of temptation; but he *rises again* by repentance, finds mercy with God, and regains his peace.

(2.) *The wicked* man, who expected to see his ruin and to help it forward, is undone. He *falls into mischief*; his sins and his troubles are his utter destruction.

~~1247~~ PROVERBS 24:17-18

CAUTIONS AGAINST ENVY

Here,

1. The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden us. If any have done us an ill turn, or if we bear them ill-will only because they stand in our light or in our way, when any damage comes to them (suppose they fall), or any danger (suppose they stumble), our corrupt hearts are too apt to conceive a secret delight and satisfaction in it — *Aha! so would we have it; they are entangled; the wilderness has shut them in* — or, as Tyrus said concerning Jerusalem (~~2302~~ Ezekiel 26:2) *I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste.* “Men hope in the ruin of their enemies or rivals to wreak their revenge or to find their account; but be not thou so inhuman; *rejoice not when the worst enemy thou hast falls.*” There may be a holy joy in the destruction of God's enemies, as it tends to the glory of God and the welfare of the church (~~4880~~ Psalm 58:10); but in the ruin of our enemies, as such, we must by no means rejoice; on the contrary, we must weep even with them when they weep (as David, ~~4883~~ Psalm 35:13, 14), and that in sincerity, not so much as letting our hearts be secretly glad at their calamities.

2. The provocation which that pleasure gives to God is assigned as the reason of that prohibition: *The Lord will see it*, though it be hidden in the heart only, *and it will displease him*, as it will displease a prudent father to see one child triumph in the correction of another, which he ought to tremble at, and take warning by, not knowing how soon it may be his own case, he having so often deserved it. Solomon adds an argument *ad hominem* — *addressed to the individual*: “Thou canst not do a greater kindness to *thy enemy*, when he has fallen, than to rejoice in it; for them, to cross thee and vex thee, God will *turn his wrath from him*; for, as *the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God*, so the righteousness of God was never intended to gratify the wrath of man, and humour his foolish passions; rather than seem to do that he will adjourn the execution of his wrath: nay, it is implied that when he *turns his wrath from him* he will turn it against thee and the cup of trembling shall be put into thy hand.”

PROVERBS 24:19-20

CAUTIONS AGAINST ENVY

Here,

1. He repeats the caution he had before given against envying the pleasures and successes of wicked man in their wicked ways. This he quotes from his father David, ¹⁸⁰¹Psalm 37:1. We must not in any case *fret* ourselves, or make ourselves uneasy, whatever God does in his providence how disagreeable soever it is to our sentiments, interests, and expectations, we must acquiesce in it. Even that which grieves us must not *fret* us; nor must our eye be evil against any because God is good. Are we more wise or just than he? If wicked people prosper, we must not therefore incline to do as they do.

2. He gives a reason for this caution, taken from the end of that way which wicked man walk in. Envy not their prosperity; for,

(1.) There is no true happiness in it: *Thee shall be no reward to the evil man*; his prosperity only serves for his present subsistence; these are all the good things he must ever expect: there is none intended him in the world of retribution. *He has his reward*, ⁴⁰⁰²Matthew 6:2. He shall have

none. Those are not to be envied that have their portion in this life and must out-live it, ~~174~~ Psalm 17:14.

(2.) There is no continuance in it; their *candle* shines brightly, but it shall presently *be put out*, and a final period put to all their comforts, ~~124~~ Job 21:14; ~~150~~ Psalm 37:1, 2.

~~122~~ PROVERBS 24:21-22

COUNSEL REGARDING MAGISTRATES

Note,

1. Religion and loyalty must go together. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear; as members of a community, incorporated for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God has set over us, ~~150~~ Romans 13:1, 2. Those that are truly religious will be loyal, in conscience towards God; the godly in the land will be the *quite in the land*; and those are not truly loyal, or will be so no longer than is for their interest, that are not religious. How should he be true to his prince that is false to his God? And, if they come in competition, it is an adjudged case, we must *obey God rather than men*.

2. Innovations in both are to be dreaded. Have nothing to do, he does not say, with those that *change*, for there may be cause to change for the better, but *those that are given to change*, that affect change for change-sake, out of a peevish discontent with that which is and a fondness for novelty, or a desire to fish in troubled waters: *Meddle not with those that are given to change* either in religion or in a civil government; *come not into their secret*; join not with them in their cabals, nor enter into the mystery of their iniquity.

3. Those that are of restless, factious, turbulent spirits, commonly pull mischief upon their own heads ere they are aware: *Their calamity shall rise suddenly*. Though they carry on their designs with the utmost secrecy, they will be discovered, and brought to condign punishment, when they little think of it. *Who knows* the time and manner of *the ruin* which both God and the king will bring on their contemnners, *both* on them and those that meddle with them?

~~123~~ PROVERBS 24:23-26

COUNSEL TO MAGISTRATES

Here are lessons for *wise* men, that is, judges and princes. As subjects must do their duty, and be obedient to magistrates, so magistrates must do their duty in administering justice to their subjects, both in pleas of the crown and causes between party and party. These are lessons for them.

1. They must always weigh the merits of a cause, and not be swayed by any regard, one way or other, to the parties concerned: *It is not good* in itself, nor can it ever do well, *to have respect of persons in judgment*; the consequences of it cannot but be the perverting of justice and doing wrong under colour of law and equity. A good judge will know the truth, not know faces, so as to countenance a friend and help him out in a bad cause, or so much as omit any thing that can be said or done in favour of a righteous cause, when it is the cause of an enemy.

2. They must never connive at or encourage wicked people in their wicked practices. Magistrates in their places, and ministers in theirs, are to deal faithfully and the wicked man, though he be a great man or a particular friend, to convict him of his wickedness, to show him what will be in the end thereof, to discover him to others, that they may avoid him. But if those whose office it is thus to show people their transgressions palliate them and connive at them, if they excuse the wicked man, much more if they prefer him and associate with him (which is, in effect, to say, *Thou art righteous*), they shall justly be looked upon as enemies to the public peace and welfare, which they ought to advance, and *the people shall curse them* and cry out shame on them; and even those of other *nations shall abhor them*, as base betrayers of their trust.

3. They must discountenance and give check to all fraud, violence, injustice, and immorality; and, though thereby they may disoblige a particular person, yet they will recommend themselves to the favour of God and man. Let magistrates and ministers, and private persons too that are capable of doing it, *rebuke* the wicked, that they may bring them to repentance or put them to shame, and they shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms: *To them shall be delight*, when their consciences witness for them that they have been witnesses for God; *and a good blessing shall come upon them*, the blessing of God and good men; they

shall be deemed religion's patrons and their country's patriots. See ~~1823~~ Proverbs 28:23.

4. They must always give judgment according to equity (v. 26); they must *give a right answer*, that is, give their opinion and pass sentence according to law and them true merits of the cause; and *every one shall kiss his lips* that does so, that is, shall love and honour him, and be subject to his orders, for there is a kiss of allegiance as well as of affection. He that in common conversation likewise speaks pertinently and with sincerity recommends himself to his company and is beloved and respected by all.

~~1827~~ PROVERBS 24:27

ENCOURAGEMENT TO HONESTY AND INDUSTRY

This is a rule of prudence in the management of household affairs; for all good men should be good husbands, and manage with discretion, which would prevent a great deal of sin, and trouble, and disgrace to their profession.

- 1.** We must prefer necessities before conveniences, and not lay that out for show which should be expended for the support of the family. We must be contented with a mean cottage for a habitation, rather than want, or go in debt for, food convenient.
- 2.** We must not think of building till we can afford it: "First apply thyself to *thy work without in the field*; let thy ground be put into good order; look after thy husbandry, for it is that by which thou must get; and, when thou hast got well by that, then, and not till then, thou mayest think of rebuilding and beautifying *thy house*, for that is it upon which, and in which, thou wilt have occasion to spend." Many have ruined their estates and families by laying out money on that which brings nothing in, beginning *to build* when they were *not able to finish*. Some understand it as advice to young men not to marry (for by that the house is built) till they have set up in the world, and not wherewith to maintain a wife and children comfortably.
- 3.** When we have any great design on foot it is wisdom to take it before us, and make the necessary preparations, before we fall to work, that, when it is begun, it may not stand still for want of materials. Solomon observed

this rule himself in building the house of God; all was made ready *before it was brought to the ground*, ~~1Kings~~ 1 Kings 6:7.

~~1Pb3~~ PROVERBS 24:28-29

ENCOURAGEMENT TO HONESTY AND INDUSTRY

We are here forbidden to be in any thing injurious to our neighbour, particularly in and by the forms of law, either,

1. As a witness: “Never bear a testimony against any man *without cause*, unless what thou sayest thou knowest to be punctually true and thou hast a clear call to testify it. Never bear a false testimony against any one;” for it follows, “*Deceive not with thy lips; deceive not the judge and jury, deceive not those whom thou conversest with, into an ill opinion of thy neighbour. When thou speakest of thy neighbour do not only speak that which is true, but take heed lest, in the manner of thy speaking, thou insinuate any thing that is otherwise and so shouldst deceive by innuendos or hyperboles.*” Or,

2. As a plaintiff or prosecutor. If there be occasion to bring an action or information against thy neighbour, let it not be from a spirit of revenge. “*Say not, I am resolved I will be even with him: I will do so to him as he had done to me.*” Even a righteous cause becomes unrighteous when it is thus prosecuted with malice. *Say not, I will render to the man according to his work, and make him pay dearly for it; for it is God's prerogative to do so, and we must leave it to him, and not step into his throne, or take his work out of his hands. If we will needs be our own carvers, and judges in our own cause, we forfeit the benefit of an appeal to God's tribunal; therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because he has said, Vengeance is mine.*

~~1Pb3~~ PROVERBS 24:30-34

THE VINEYARD OF THE SLOTHFUL

Here is,

1. The view which Solomon took of *the field and vineyard of the slothful man*. He did not go on purpose to see it, but, as he passed by, observing the fruitfulness of the ground, as it is very proper for travellers to do, and his subjects' management of their land, as it is very proper for magistrates to do, he cast his eye upon a *field* and a *vineyard* unlike all the rest; for, though the soil was good, yet there was nothing growing in them but *thorns and nettles*, not here and there one, but they were all overrun with weeds; and, if there had been any fruit, it would have been eaten up by the beasts, for there was no fence: *The stone-wall was broken down* See the effects of that curse upon the ground (^{<OVERS}Genesis 3:18), "*Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*, and nothing else unless thou take pains with it." See what a blessing to the world the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this earth, even Canaan itself, would be without it. *The king himself is served of the field*, but he would be ill served if God did not teach the husbandman discretion and diligence to clear the ground, plant it, sow it, and fence it. See what a great difference there is between some and others in the management even of their worldly affairs, and how little some consult their reputation, not caring though they proclaim their slothfulness, in the manifest effects of it, to all that pass by, shamed by their neighbour's diligence.

2. The reflections which he made upon it. He paused a little *and considered it, looked again upon it, and received instruction*. He did not break out into any passionate censures of the owner, did not call him any ill names, but he endeavoured himself to get good by the observation and to be quickened by it to diligence. Note, Those that are to give instruction to others must receive instruction themselves, and instruction may be received, not only from what we read and hear, but from what we see, not only from what we see of the works of God, but from what we see of the manners of man, not only from men's good manners, but from their evil manners. Plutarch relates a saying of Cato Major, "That wise men profit more by fools than fools by wise men; for wise men will avoid the faults of fools, but fools will not imitate the virtues of wise men." Solomon reckoned that he *received instruction* by this sight, though it did not suggest to him any new notion or lesson, but only put him in mind of an observation he himself had formerly made, both of the ridiculous folly of the sluggard (who, when he has needful work to do, lies dozing in bed and cries, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber*, and still it will be a little more, till he has slept his eyes out, and, instead of being fitted by sleep for business,

as wise men are, he is dulled, and stupefied, and made good for nothing) and of certain misery that attends him: his *poverty comes as one that travels*; it is constantly coming nearer and nearer to him, and will be upon him speedily, and want seizes him as irresistibly *as an armed man*, a highwayman that will strip him of all he has. Now this is applicable, not only to our worldly business, to show what a scandalous thing slothfulness in that is, and how injurious to the family, but to the affairs of our souls. Note,

(1.) Our souls are our fields and vineyards, which we are every one of us to take care of, to dress, and to keep. They are capable of being improved with good husbandry; that may be got out of them which will be fruit abounding to our account. We are charged with them, to occupy them till our Lord come; and a great deal of care and pains it is requisite that we should take about them.

(2.) These fields and vineyards are often in a very bad state, not only no fruit brought forth, but all overgrown with *thorns* and *nettles* (scratching, stinging, inordinate lusts and passions, pride, covetousness, sensuality, malice, those are the thorns and nettles, the wild grapes, which the unsanctified heart produces), no guard kept against the enemy, but the *stone-wall broken down*, and all lies in common, all exposed.

(3.) Where it is thus it is owing to the sinner's own slothfulness and folly. He is a sluggard, loves sleep, hates labour; and he is void of understanding, understands neither his business nor his interest; he is perfectly besotted.

(4.) The issue of it will certainly be the ruin of the soul and all its welfare. It is everlasting want that thus comes upon it as an armed man. We know the place assigned to the wicked and slothful servant.