

CHAPTER 11

PROVERBS 11:1

WEIGHTY SAYINGS

As religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness (he is not an honest man that is not devout), so righteousness towards men is a branch of true religion, for he is not a godly man that is not honest, nor can he expect that his devotion should be accepted; for,

1. Nothing is more offensive to God than deceit in commerce. A *false balance* is here put for all manner of unjust and fraudulent practices in dealing with any person, which are all an *abomination to the Lord*, and render those abominable to him that allow themselves in the use of such accursed arts of thriving. It is an affront to justice, which God is the patron of, as well as a wrong to our neighbour, whom God is the protector of. Men make light of such frauds, and think there is no sin in that which there is money to be got by, and, while it passes undiscovered, they cannot blame themselves for it; a blot is no blot till it is hit, PROV Hosea 12:7, 8. But they are not the less an abomination to God, who will be the avenger of those that are defrauded by their brethren.

2. Nothing is more pleasing to God than fair and honest dealing, nor more necessary to make us and our devotions acceptable to him: A *just weight is his delight*. He himself goes by a just weight, and holds the scale of judgment with an even hand, and therefore is pleased with those that are herein followers of him. A balance cheats, under pretence of doing right most exactly, and therefore is the greater abomination to God.

PROVERBS 11:2

WEIGHTY SAYINGS

Observe,

1. How he that exalts himself is here abased, and contempt put upon him. *When pride comes then comes shame.* Pride is a sin which men have reason to be themselves ashamed of; it is a shame to a man who springs out of the earth, who lives upon alms, depends upon God, and has forfeited all he has, to be proud. It is a sin which others cry out shame on and look upon with disdain; he that is haughty makes himself contemptible; it is a sin for which God often brings men down, as he did Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, whose ignominy immediately attended their vain-glory; for God *resists the proud*, contradicts them, and counterworks them, in the thing they are proud of, ~~201~~ Isaiah 2:11, etc.

2. How he that humbles himself is here exalted, and a high character is given him. As with the proud there is folly, and will be shame, so *with the lowly there is wisdom*, and will be honour, for a man's wisdom gains him respect and makes his face to shine before men; or, if any be so base as to trample upon the humble, God will give them grace which will be their glory. Considering how safe, and quiet, and easy, those are that are of a humble spirit, what communion they have with God and comfort in themselves, we will say, *With the lowly is wisdom.*

~~211~~ PROVERBS 11:3

WEIGHTY SAYINGS

It is not only promised that God will guide the upright, and threatened that he will destroy the transgressors, but, that we may be the more fully assured of both, it is here represented as if the nature of the thing were such on both sides that it would do it itself.

1. The integrity of an honest man will itself be his guide in the way of duty and the way of safety. His principles are fixed, his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain; his sincerity keeps him steady, and he needs not tuck about every time the wind turns, having no other end to drive at than to keep a good conscience. *Integrity and uprightness will preserve men*, ~~221~~ Psalm 25:21.

2. The iniquity of a bad man will itself be his ruin. As the plainness of a good man will be his protection, though he is ever so much exposed, so the perverseness of sinners will be their destruction, though they think

themselves even so well fortified. They shall fall into pits of their own digging, ^{<1152>}Proverbs 5:22.

^{<1104>}PROVERBS 11:4

ADVANTAGES OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Note,

- 1.** The *day of death* will be a *day of wrath*. It is a messenger of God's wrath; therefore when Moses had meditated on man's mortality he takes occasion thence to admire *the power of God's anger*, ^{<1101>}Psalm 110:11. It is a debt owing, not to nature, but to God's justice. *After death the judgment*, and that is a *day of wrath*, ^{<1107>}Revelation 6:17.
- 2.** Riches will stand men in no stead that day. They will neither put by the stroke nor ease the pain, much less take out the sting; what profit will this world's birth-rights be of then? In the day of public judgments riches often expose men rather than protect them, ^{<1109>}Ezekiel 7:19.
- 3.** It is righteousness only that will *deliver from* the evil of *death*. A good conscience will make death easy, and take off the terror of it; it is the privilege of the righteous only not to be hurt of the second death, and so not much hurt by the first.

^{<1105>}PROVERBS 11:5-6

ADVANTAGES OF THE RIGHTEOUS

These two verses are, in effect, the same, and both to the same purport with v. 3. For the truths are here of such certainty and weight that they cannot be too often inculcated. Let us govern ourselves by these principles.

- I.** That the ways of religion are plain and safe, and in them we may enjoy a holy security. A living principle of honesty and grace will be,

1. Our best direction in the right way, in every doubtful case to say to us, *This is the way, walk in it.* He that acts without a guide looks right on and sees his way before him.

2. Our best deliverance from every false way: *The righteousness of the upright* shall be armour of proof to them, to deliver them from the allurements of the devil and the world, and from their menaces.

The ways of wickedness are dangerous and destructive: *The wicked shall fail* into misery and ruin *by their own wickedness*, and be *taken in their own naughtiness* as in a snare. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.* Their sin will be their punishment; that very thing by which they contrived to shelter themselves will make against them.

~~117~~ PROVERBS 11:7

ADVANTAGES OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Note,

1. Even wicked men, while they live, may keep up a confident expectation of a happiness when they die, or at least a happiness in this world. The hypocrite has his hope, in which he wraps himself as the spider in her web. The worldling expects great matters from his wealth; he calls it *goods laid up for many years*, and hopes to take his ease in it and to be merry; but in death their expectation will be frustrated: the worldling must leave this world which he expected to continue in and the hypocrite will come short of that world which he expected to remove to, ~~178~~ Job 27:8.

2. It will be the great aggravation of the misery of wicked people that their hopes will sink into despair just when they expect them to be crowned with fruition. When a godly man dies his expectations are out-done, and all his fears vanish; but when a wicked man dies his expectations are dashed, dashed to pieces; in that very day his thoughts perish with which he had pleased himself, his hopes vanish.

~~118~~ PROVERBS 11:8

ADVANTAGES OF THE RIGHTEOUS

As always in death, so sometimes in life, the righteous are remarkably favoured and the wicked crossed.

1. Good people are helped out of the distresses which they thought themselves lost in, and their feet are set in a large room, ~~186D~~ Psalm 66:12; 34:19. God has found out a way to deliver his people even when they have despaired and their enemies have triumphed, as if the wilderness had shut them in.
2. The wicked have fallen into the distresses which they thought themselves far from, nay, which they had been instrumental to bring the righteous into, so that they seem to come in their stead, as a ransom for the just. Mordecai is saved from the gallows, Daniel from the lion's den, and Peter from the prison; and their persecutors *come in their stead*. The Israelites are delivered out of the Red Sea and the Egyptians drowned in it. So precious are the saints in God's eye that he *gives men for them*, ~~288B~~ Isaiah 43:3, 4.

~~119~~ PROVERBS 11:9

ADVANTAGES OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Here is,

1. Hypocrisy designing ill. It is not only the murderer with his sword, but the *hypocrite with his mouth*, that *destroys his neighbour*, decoying him into sin, or into mischief, by the specious pretences of kindness and goodwill. *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*, but no tongue more fatal than the flattering tongue.
2. Honesty defeating the design and escaping the snare: *Through knowledge* of the devices of Satan *shall the just be delivered* from the snares which the hypocrite has laid for him; seducers shall not deceive the elect. By the knowledge of God, and the scriptures, and their own hearts, shall the just be delivered from those that lie in wait to deceive, and so to destroy, ~~568B~~ Romans 16:18, 19.

PROVERBS 11:10-11

COMMON TRUTHS

It is here observed,

I. That good men are generally well-beloved by their neighbours, but nobody cares for wicked people.

1. It is true there are some few that are enemies to the righteous, that are prejudiced against God and godliness, and are therefore vexed to see good men in power and prosperity; but all indifferent persons, even those that have no great stock of religion themselves, have a good word for a good man; and therefore *when it goes well with the righteous*, when they are advanced and put into a capacity of doing good according to their desire, it is so much the better for all about them, and *the city rejoices*. For the honour and encouragement of virtue, and as it is the accomplishment of the promise of God, we should be glad to see virtuous men prosper in the world, and brought into reputation.

2. Wicked people may perhaps have here and there a well-wisher among those who are altogether such as themselves, but among the generality of their neighbours they get ill-will; they may be feared, but they are not loved, and therefore *when they perish there is shouting*; every body takes a pleasure in seeing them disgraced and disarmed, removed out of places of trust and power, chased out of the world, and wishes no greater loss may come to the town, the rather because they hope *the righteous may come in their stead*, as they into trouble instead of the righteous, v. 8. Let a sense of honour therefore keep us in the paths of virtue, that we may live desired and die lamented, and not be hissed off the stage, ^{<1872>}Job 27:23; ^{<1516>}Psalms 52:6.

II. That there is good reason for this, because those that are good do good, but (*as saith the proverb of the ancients*) *wickedness proceeds from the wicked*.

1. *Good men are public blessings — Vir bonus est commune bonum.* By *the blessing of the upright*, the blessings with which they are blessed, which enlarge their sphere of usefulness, — by the blessings with which they bless their neighbours, their advice, their example, their prayers, and

all the instances of their serviceableness to the public interest, — by the blessings with which God blesses others for their sake, — by these *the city is exalted* and made more comfortable to the inhabitants, and more considerable among its neighbours.

2. Wicked men are public nuisances, not only the burdens, but the plagues of their generation. The city is *overthrown by the mouth of the wicked*, whose evil communications corrupt good manners, are enough to debauch a town, to ruin virtue in it, and bring down the judgments of God upon it.

PROVERBS 11:12-13

COMMON TRUTHS

I. Silence is here recommended as an instance of true friendship, and a preservative of it, and therefore an evidence,

1. Of wisdom: *A man of understanding*, that has rule over his own spirit, if he be provoked, *holds his peace*, that he may neither give vent to his passion nor kindle the passion of others by any opprobrious language or peevish reflections.

2. Of sincerity: *He that is of a faithful spirit*, that is true, not only to his own promise, but to the interest of his friend, *conceals every matter* which, if divulged, may turn to the prejudice of his neighbour.

II. This prudent friendly concealment is here opposed to two very bad vices of the tongue: —

1. Speaking scornfully of a man to his face: *He that is void of wisdom* discovers his folly by this; he *despises his neighbour*, calls him *Raca*, and *Thou fool*, upon the least provocation, and tramples upon him as not worthy to be set with the dogs of his flock. He undervalues himself who thus undervalues one that is made of the same mould.

2. Speaking spitefully of a man behind his back: *A tale-bearer*, that carries all the stories he can pick up, true or false, from house to house, to make mischief and sow discord, *reveals secrets* which he has been entrusted with, and so breaks the laws, and forfeits all the privileges, of friendship and conversation.

PROVERBS 11:14

COMMON TRUTHS

Here is,

1. The bad omen of a kingdom's ruin: *Where no counsel is*, no consultation at all, but every thing done rashly, or no prudent consultation for the common good, but only caballing for parties and divided interests, *the people fall*, crumble into factions, fall to pieces, fall together by the ears, and fall an easy prey to their common enemies. Councils of war are necessary to the operations of war; two eyes see more than one; and mutual advice is in order to mutual assistance.
2. The good presage of a kingdom's prosperity: *In the multitude of counsellors*, that see their need one of another, and act in concert and with concern for the public welfare, *there is safety*; for what prudent methods one discerns not another may. In our private affairs we shall often find it to our advantage to advise with many; if they agree in their advice, our way will be the more clear; if they differ, we shall hear what is to be said on all sides, and be the better able to determine.

PROVERBS 11:15

THE REWARDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Here we are taught,

1. In general, that we may not use our estates as we will (he that gave them to us has reserved to himself a power to direct us how we shall use them, for they are not our own; we are but stewards), and further that God in his law consults our interests and teaches us that charity which begins at home, as well as that which must not end there. There is a good husbandry which is good divinity, and a discretion in ordering our affairs which is part of the character of a good man, ^{Psalm 112:5}. Every man must be just to his family, else he is not true to his stewardship.
2. In particular, that we must not enter rashly into suretiship,

(1.) Because there is danger of bringing ourselves into trouble by it, and our families too when we are gone: *He that is surety for a stranger*, for any one that asks him and promises him to be bound for him another time, for one whose person perhaps he knows, and thinks he knows his circumstances, but is mistaken, he *shall smart for it. Contritione conteretur* — *he shall be certainly and sadly crushed and broken by it*, and perhaps become a bankrupt. Our Lord Jesus was surety for us when we were strangers, nay, enemies, and he smarted for it; *it pleased the Lord to bruise him*.

(2.) Because he that resolves against all such suretiship keeps upon sure grounds, which a man may do if he take care not to launch out any further into business than his own credit will carry him, so that he needs not ask others to be bound for him.

PROVERBS 11:16

THE REWARDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Here,

1. It is allowed that *strong men retain riches*, that those who bustle in the world, who are men of spirit and interest, and are able to make their part good against all who stand in their way, are likely to keep what they have and to get more, while those who are weak are preyed upon by all about them.

2. It is taken for granted that *a gracious woman* is as solicitous to preserve her reputation for wisdom and modesty, humility and courtesy, and all those other graces that are the true ornaments of her sex, as strong men are to secure their estates; and those women who are truly gracious will, in like manner, effectually secure their honour by their prudence and good conduct. *A gracious woman* is as honourable as a valiant man and her honour is as sure.

PROVERBS 11:17

THE REWARDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is a common principle, Every one for himself. *Proximus egomet mihi* — *None so near to me as myself*. Now, if this be rightly understood, it will be a reason for the cherishing of gracious dispositions in ourselves and the crucifying of corrupt ones. We are friends or enemies to ourselves, even in respect of present comfort, according as we are or are not governed by religious principles.

1. A *merciful*, tender, good humoured *man*, *does good to his own soul*, makes and keeps himself easy. He has the pleasure of doing his duty, and contributing to the comfort of those that are to him as *his own soul*; for *we are members one of another*. He that waters others with his temporal good things shall find that God will water him with his spiritual blessings, which will do the best *good to his own soul*. See ²⁵⁸⁷Isaiah 58:7, etc. *If thou hide not thy eyes from thy own flesh*, but do good to others, as to thyself, if thou do good with thy own soul and *draw that out to the hungry*, thou wilt do good to thy own soul; for the Lord shall *satisfy thy soul and make fat thy bones*. Some make it part of the character of a *merciful man*, that he will make much of himself; that disposition which inclines him to be charitable to others will oblige him to allow himself also that which is convenient and to *enjoy the good of all his labour*. We may by the *soul* understand the *inward man*, as the apostle calls it, and then it teaches us that the first and great act of mercy is to provide well for our own souls the necessary supports of the spiritual life.

2. A *cruel*, froward, ill-natured *man*, *troubles his own flesh*, and so his sin becomes his punishment; he starves and dies for want of what he has, because he has not a heart to use it either for the good of others or for his own. He is vexatious to his nearest relations, that are, and should be, to him as his own flesh, ⁴¹⁸³Ephesians 5:29. Envy, and malice, and greediness of the world, are the rottenness of the bones and the consumption of the flesh.

PROVERBS 11:18

THE REWARDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Note,

1. Sinners put a most fatal cheat upon themselves: *The wicked works a deceitful work*, builds himself a house upon the sand, which will deceive him when the storm comes, promises himself *that* by his sin which he will never gain; nay, it is cutting his throat when it smiles upon him. *Sin deceived me, and by it slew me.*
2. Saints lay up the best securities for themselves: He *that sows righteousness*, that is good, and makes it his business to do good, with an eye to a future recompence, he shall have *a sure reward*; it is made as sure to him as eternal truth can make it. If the seedness fail not, the harvest shall not, ~~Galatians~~ Galatians 6:8.

PROVERBS 11:19

THE REWARDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is here shown that righteousness, not only by the divine judgment, will end in life, and wickedness in death, but that righteousness, in its own nature, has a direct tendency to life and wickedness to death.

1. True holiness is true happiness; it is a preparative for it, a pledge and earnest of it. *Righteousness* inclines, disposes, and leads, the soul *to life*.
2. In like manner, those that indulge themselves in sin are fitting themselves for destruction. The more violent a man is in sinful pursuits the more eagerly bent he is upon his own destruction; he awakens it when it seemed to slumber and hastens it when it seemed to linger.

PROVERBS 11:20

THE REWARDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

It concerns us to know what God hates and what he loves, that we may govern ourselves accordingly, may avoid his displeasure and recommend ourselves to his favour. Now here we are told,

1. That nothing is more offensive to God than hypocrisy and double-dealing, for these are signified by the word which we translate *frowardness*, pretending justice, but intending wrong, walking in crooked ways, to avoid discovery. Those *are of a froward heart* who act in contradiction to that which is good, under a profession of that which is good, and such are, more than any sinners, an *abomination to the Lord*, Isaiah 65:5.
2. That nothing is more pleasing to God than sincerity and plain-dealing: *Such as are upright in their way*, such as aim and act with integrity, such as have their conversation in the world *in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom*, these God delights in, these he even boasts of (*Hast thou considered my servant Job?*) and will have us to admire. *Behold an Israelite indeed!*

PROVERBS 11:21

THE REWARDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Observe,

1. That confederacies in sin shall certainly be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners: *Though hand join in hand*, though there are many that concur by their practice to keep wickedness in countenance, and engage to stand by one another in defending it against all the attacks of virtue and justice, — though they are in league for the support and propagation of it, — though wicked children tread in the steps of their wicked parents, and resolve to keep up the trade, in defiance of religion, — yet all this will not protect them from the justice of God; they shall not be held guiltless; it will not excuse them to say that they did as the most did and as their company did; they *shall not be unpunished*; witness the flood that was

brought upon a whole world of ungodly men. Their number, and strength, and unanimity in sin will stand them in no stead when the day of vengeance comes.

2. That entails of religion shall certainly be blessed: *The seed of the righteous*, that follow the steps of their righteousness, though they may fall into trouble, shall, in due time, *be delivered*. Though justice may come slowly to punish the wicked, and mercy may come slowly to save the righteous, yet both will come surely. Sometimes *the seed of the righteous*, though they are not themselves righteous, are delivered for the sake of their godly ancestors, as Israel often, and the seed of David.

PROVERBS 11:22

WEIGHTY SAYINGS

By *discretion* here we must understand *religion* and *grace*, a true taste and relish (so the word signifies) of the honours and pleasures that attend an unspotted virtue; so that *a woman without discretion* is a woman of a loose and dissolute conversation; and then observe,

1. It is taken for granted here that beauty or comeliness of body is *as a jewel of gold*, a thing very valuable, and, where there is wisdom and grace to guard against the temptations of it, it is a great ornament, (*Gratior est pulchro veniens de corpore virtus — Virtue appears peculiarly graceful when associated with beauty*); but a foolish wanton woman, of a light carriage, is fitly compared to a swine, though she be ever so handsome, wallowing in the mire of filthy lusts, with which the mind and conscience are defiled, and, though washed, returning to them.

2. It is lamented that beauty should be so abused as it is by those that have not modesty with it. It seems ill-bestowed upon them; it is quite misplaced, *as a jewel in a swine's snout*, with which he roots in the dunghill. If beauty be not guarded by virtue, the virtue is exposed by the beauty. It may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments; it is a pity that those should have them who have not discretion to use them well.

<112> PROVERBS 11:23

WEIGHTY SAYINGS

This tells us what *the desire* and *expectation of the righteous* and *of the wicked* are and how they will prove, what they would have and what they shall have.

1. *The righteous* would have *good, only good*; all they desire is that it may go well with all about them; they wish no hurt to any, but happiness to all; as to themselves, their desire is not to gratify any evil lust, but to obtain the favour of a good God and to preserve the peace of a good conscience; and good they shall have, that good which they desire, <1504> Psalm 37:4.

2. *The wicked* would have *wrath*; they desire the woeful day, that God's judgments may gratify their passion and revenge, may remove those that stand in their way, and that they may make an advantage to themselves by fishing in troubled waters; and wrath they shall have, so shall their doom be. They expect and desire mischief to others, but it shall return upon themselves; as they loved cursing, they shall have enough of it.

<112> PROVERBS 11:24

WEIGHTY SAYINGS

Note,

1. It is possible a man may grow rich by prudently spending what he has, may scatter in works of piety, charity, and generosity, and yet may increase; nay, by that means may increase, as the corn is increased by being sown. By cheerfully using what we have our spirits are exhilarated, and so fitted for the business we have to do, by minding which closely what we have is increased; it gains a reputation which contributes to the increase. But it is especially to be ascribed to God; he blesses the giving hand, and so makes it a getting hand, <402> 2 Corinthians 9:20. *Give, and it shall be given you.*

2. It is possible a man may grow poor by meanly sparing what he has, *withholding more than is meet*, not paying just debts, not relieving the

poor, not providing what is convenient for the family, not allowing necessary expenses for the preservation of the goods; this *tends to poverty*; it cramps men's ingenuity and industry, weakens their interest, destroys their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God: and, let men be ever so saving of what they have, if God blast it and blow upon it, it comes to nothing. *A fire not blown shall consume it,* ^{<306>}Haggai 1:6, 9.

^{<312>}PROVERBS 11:25

THE PRAISE OF LIBERALITY

So backward we are to works of charity, and so ready to think that giving undoes us, that we need to have it very much pressed upon us how much it is for our own advantage to do good to others, as before, v. 17.

- 1.** We shall have the comfort of it in our own bosoms: *The liberal soul*, the soul of blessing, that prays for the afflicted and provides for them, that scatters blessings with gracious lips and generous hands, that soul *shall be made fat* with true pleasure and enriched with more grace.
- 2.** We shall have the recompence of it both from God and man: *He that waters* others with the streams of his bounty *shall be also watered himself*; God will certainly return it in the dews, in the plentiful showers, of his blessing, which he will *pour out, till there be not room enough to receive it,* ^{<380>}Malachi 3:10. Men that have any sense of gratitude will return it if there be occasion; the *merciful shall find mercy* and the kind be kindly dealt with.
- 3.** We shall be enabled still to do yet more good: *He that waters, even he shall be as rain* (so some read it); he shall be recruited as the clouds are which return after the rain, and shall be further useful and acceptable, as the rain to the new-mown grass. *he that teaches shall learn* (so the Chaldee reads it); he that uses his knowledge in teaching others shall himself be taught of God; to him that has, and uses what he has, more shall be given.

PROVERBS 11:26

THE PRAISE OF LIBERALITY

See here,

1. What use we are to make of the gifts of God's bounty; we must not hoard them up merely for our own advantage, that we may be enriched by them, but we must bring them forth for the benefit of others, that they may be supported and maintained by them. It is a sin, when corn is dear and scarce, to withhold it, in hopes that it will still grow dearer, so to keep up and advance the market, when it is already so high that the poor suffer by it; and at such a time it is the duty of those that have stocks of corn by them to consider the poor, and to be willing to sell at the market-price, to be content with moderate profit, and not aim to make a gain of God's judgments. It is a noble and extensive piece of charity for those that have stores wherewithal to do it to help to keep the markets low when the price of our commodities grows excessive.

2. What regard we are to have to the voice of the people. We are not to think it an indifferent thing, and not worth heeding, whether we have the ill will and word, or the good will and word, of our neighbours, their prayers or their curses; for here we are taught to dread their curses, and forego our own profit rather than incur them; and to court their blessings, and be at some expense to purchase them. Sometimes, *vox populi est vox Dei* — *the voice of the people is the voice of God.*

PROVERBS 11:27

THE PRAISE OF LIBERALITY

Observe,

1. Those that are industrious to do good in the world get themselves beloved both with God and man: *He that rises early to that which is good* (so the word is), that seeks opportunities of serving his friends and relieving the poor, and lays out himself therein, *procures favour*. All about him love him, and speak well of him, and will be ready to do him a

kindness; and, which is better than that, better than life, he has God's lovingkindness.

2. Those that are industrious to do mischief are preparing ruin for themselves: *It shall come unto them*; some time or other they will be paid in their own coin. And, observe, *seeking mischief* is here set in opposition to *seeking good*; for those that are not doing good are doing hurt.

PROVERBS 11:28

THE FOLLY AND MISERY OF SINNERS

Observe,

1. Our riches will fail us when we are in the greatest need: *He that trusts in them*, as if they would secure him the favour of God and be his protection and portion, *shall fall*, as a man who lays his weight on a broken reed, which will not only disappoint him, but run into his hand and pierce him.

2. Our righteousness will stand us in stead when our riches fail us: *The righteous shall then flourish as a branch*, the branch of righteousness, like a tree whose leaf shall not wither, ¹⁰¹³Psalm 1:3. Even in death, when riches fail men, the *bones* of the righteous *shall flourish as a herb*, ²⁶⁶⁴Isaiah 66:14. When those that take root in the world wither those that are grafted into Christ and partake of his root and fatness shall be fruitful and flourishing.

PROVERBS 11:29

THE FOLLY AND MISERY OF SINNERS

Two extremes in the management of family-affairs are here condemned and the ill consequences of them foretold: —

1. Carefulness and carnal policy, on the one hand. There are those that by their extreme earnestness in pursuit of the world, their anxiety about their business and fretfulness about their losses, their strictness with their servants and their niggardliness towards their families, *trouble their own*

houses and give continual vexation to all about them; while others think, by supporting factions and feuds in their families, which are really a trouble to their houses, to serve some turn for themselves, and either to get or to save by it. But they will both be disappointed; they will *inherit the wind*. All they will get by these arts will not only be empty and worthless as the wind, but noisy and troublesome, vanity and vexation.

2. Carelessness and want of common prudence, on the other. He that is a fool in his business, that either minds it not or goes awkwardly about it, that has no contrivance and consideration, no only loses his reputation and interest, but becomes a *servant to the wise in heart*. He is impoverished, and forced to work for his living; while those that manage wisely raise themselves, and come to have dominion over him, and others like him. It is rational, and very fit, that *the fool should be servant to the wise in heart*, and upon that account, among others, we are bound to submit our wills to the will of God, and to be subject to him, because we are fools and he is infinitely wise.

PROVERBS 11:30

THE FOLLY AND MISERY OF SINNERS

This shows what great blessings good men are, especially those that are eminently wise, to the places where they live, and therefore how much to be valued.

1. The righteous are as *trees of life*; the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of paradise, God's church on earth, for whose sake it stands.

2. The wise are something more; they are as trees of knowledge, not forbidden, but commanded knowledge. *He that is wise*, by communicating his wisdom, *wins souls*, wins upon them to bring them in love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to *turn many to righteousness*, and that is the same with winning souls here, Daniel 12:3. Abraham's proselytes

are called *the souls that he had gotten*, ^{<117>}Genesis 12:5. Those that would win souls have need of wisdom to know how to deal with them; and those that do win souls show that they are wise.

^{<113>}PROVERBS 11:31

THE FOLLY AND MISERY OF SINNERS

This, I think, is the only one of Solomon's proverbs that has that note of attention prefixed to it, *Behold!* which intimates that it contains not only an evident truth, which may be beheld, but an eminent truth, which must be considered.

1. Some understand both parts of a recompence in displeasure: *The righteous*, if they do amiss, shall be punished for their offences in this world; much more shall wicked people be punished for theirs, which are committed, not through infirmity, but with a high hand. If judgment begin at the house of God, what will become of the ungodly? ^{<107>}1 Peter 4:17, 18; ^{<27>}Luke 23:31.

2. I rather understand it of a recompence of reward to the righteous and punishment to sinners. Let us behold providential retributions. There are some recompences *in the earth*, in this world, and in the things of this world, which prove that *verily there is a God that judges in the earth* (^{<81>}Psalm 58:11); but they are not universal; many sins go unpunished in the earth, and services unrewarded, which indicates that there is a judgment to come, and that there will be more exact and full retributions in the future state. Many times *the righteous* are *recompensed* for their righteousness here *in the earth*, though that is not the principal, much less the only reward either intended for them or intended by them; but whatever the word of God has promised them, or the wisdom of God sees good for them, they shall have *in the earth*. *The wicked* also, and *the sinner*, are sometimes remarkably punished in this life, nations, families, particular persons. And if the righteous, who do not deserve the least reward, yet have part of their recompence here on earth, much more shall the wicked, who deserve the greatest punishment, have part of their punishment on earth, as an earnest of worse to come. Therefore *stand in awe and sin not*. If those have two heavens that merit none, much more shall those have two hells that merit both.