

CHAPTER 16

PROVERBS 16:1

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

As we read this, it teaches us a great truth, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to *think or speak any thing of ourselves* that is wise and good, but that all *our sufficiency is of God*, who is with the heart and with the mouth, and *works in us both to will and to do*, ^{<TR3>}Philippians 2:13; ^{<B07>}Psalms 10:17. But most read it otherwise: *The preparation of the heart is in man* (he may contrive and design this and the other) but *the answer of the tongue*, not only the delivering of what he designed to speak, but the issue and success of what he designed to do, *is of the Lord*. That is, in short,

- 1. Man purposes.** He has a freedom of thought and a freedom of will permitted him; let him form his projects, and lay his schemes, as he thinks best: but, after all,
- 2. God disposes.** Man cannot go on with his business without the assistance and blessing of God, who *made man's mouth* and teaches us what we shall say. Nay, God easily can, and often does, cross men's purposes, and break their measures. It was a curse that was prepared in Balaam's heart, but the answer of the tongue was a blessing.

PROVERBS 16:2

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Note,

- 1.** We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves: *All the ways of a man*, all his designs, all his doings, *are clean in his own eyes*, and he sees nothing amiss in them, nothing for which to condemn himself, or which should make his projects prove otherwise than well; and therefore he is

confident of success, and that the answer of the tongue shall be according to the expectations of the heart; but there is a great deal of pollution cleaving to our ways, which we are not aware of, or do not think so ill of as we ought.

2. The judgment of God concerning us, we are sure, is according to truth: He *weighs the spirits* in a just and unerring balance, knows what is in us, and passes a judgment upon us accordingly, writing *Tekel* upon that which passed our scale with approbation — *weighed in the balance and found wanting*; and by his judgment we must stand or fall. He not only sees men's ways but tries their spirits, and we are as our spirits are.

~~2103~~ PROVERBS 16:3

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Note,

1. It is a very desirable thing to have *our thoughts established*, and not tossed, and put into a hurry, by disquieting cares and fears, — to go on in an even steady course of honesty and piety, not disturbed, or put out of frame, by any event or change, — to be satisfied that all shall work for good and issue well at last, and therefore to be always easy and sedate.

2. The only way to have our *thoughts established* is to *commit our works to the Lord*. The great concerns of our souls must be committed to the grace of God, with a dependence upon and submission to the conduct of that grace (~~2~~ Timothy 1:12); all our outward concerns must be committed to the providence of God, and to the sovereign, wise, and gracious disposal of that providence. *Roll thy works upon the Lord* (so the word is); roll the burden of thy care from thyself upon God. Lay the matter before him by prayer. *Make known thy works unto the Lord* (so some read it), not only the works of thy hand, but the workings of thy heart; and then leave it with him, by faith and dependence upon him, submission and resignation to him. *The will of the Lord be done*. We may then be easy when we resolve that whatever pleases God shall please us.

PROVERBS 16:4

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Note,

1. That God is the first cause. He is the former of all things and all persons, the fountain of being; he gave every creature the being it has and appointed it its place. Even the wicked are his creatures, though they are rebels; he gave them those powers with which they fight against him, which aggravates their wickedness, that they will not let him that made them rule them, and therefore, though he made them, he will not save them.

2. That God is the last end. All is of him and from him, and therefore all is to him and for him. He made all according to his will and for his praise; he designed to serve his own purposes by all his creatures, and he will not fail of his designs; all are his servants. The wicked he is not glorified by, but he will be glorified upon. He makes no man wicked, but he made those who he foresaw would be wicked: yet he made them (¹⁰⁶⁶Genesis 6:6), because he knew how to *get himself honour upon them*. See ⁸⁹²Romans 9:22. Or (as some understand it) he made the wicked to be employed by him as the instruments of his wrath in the day of evil, when he brings judgments on the world. He makes some use even of wicked men, as of other things, to be his sword, his hand (⁹⁷³Psalms 17:13, 14), *flagellum Dei* — *the scourge of God*. The king of Babylon is called his *servant*.

PROVERBS 16:5

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Note,

1. The pride of sinners sets God against them. He that, being high in estate is proud in heart, whose spirit is elevated with his condition, so that he becomes insolent in his conduct towards God and man, let him know that though he admires himself, and others caress him, yet he is *an abomination to the Lord*. The great God despises him; the holy God detest him.

2. The power of sinners cannot secure them against God, though they strengthen themselves with body hands. Though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment. *Woe unto him that strives with his Maker,* ~~112~~ Proverbs 11:21; ~~389~~ Isaiah 45:9.

~~116~~ PROVERBS 16:6

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

See here,

1. How the guilt of sin is taken away from us — by the *mercy and truth* of God, mercy in promising, truth in performing, the mercy and truth which kiss each other in Jesus Christ the Mediator — by the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so brightly — by our mercy and truth, as the condition of the pardon and a necessary qualification for it — by these, and not by the legal sacrifices, ~~316~~ Micah 6:7, 8.

2. How the power of sin is broken in us. By the principles of *mercy and truth* commanding in us the corrupt inclinations are purged out (so we may take the former part); however, *by the fear of the Lord*, and the influence of that fear, *men depart from evil*; those will not dare to sin against God who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of him.

~~116~~ PROVERBS 16:7

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Note,

1. God can turn foes into friends when he pleases. He that has all hearts in his hand has access to men's spirits and power over them, working insensibly, but irresistibly upon them, can make *a man's enemies to be at peace with him*, can change their minds, or force them into a feigned submission. He can slay all enemies, and bring those together that were at the greatest distance from each other.

2. He will do it for us when we please him. If we make it our care to be reconciled to God, and to keep ourselves in his love, he will incline those

that have been envious towards us, and vexatious to us, to entertain a good opinion of us and to become our friends. God made Esau to be at peace with Jacob, Abimelech with Isaac, and David's enemies to court his favour and desire a league with Israel. The image of God appearing upon the righteous, and his particular lovingkindness to them, are enough to recommend them to the respect of all, even of those that have been most prejudiced against them.

PROVERBS 16:8

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Here,

1. It is supposed that an honest good man may have but a little of the wealth of this world (all the righteous are not rich), — that a man may have but little, and yet may be honest (though poverty is a temptation to dishonesty, ^{30:9}Proverbs 30:9, yet not an invincible one), — and that a man may grow rich, for a while, by fraud and oppression, may have *great revenues*, and those got and kept *without right*, may have no good title to them nor make any good use of them.

2. It is maintained that a small estate, honestly come by, which a man is content with, enjoys comfortably, serves God with cheerfully, and puts to a right use, is much better and more valuable than a great estate ill-got, and then ill-kept or ill-spent. It carries with it more inward satisfaction, a better reputation with all that are wise and good; it will last longer, and will turn to a better account in the great day, when men will be judged, not according to what they had, but what they did.

PROVERBS 16:9

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Man is here represented to us,

1. As a reasonable creature, that has the faculty of contriving for himself: *His heart devises his way*, designs an end, and projects ways and means leading to that end, which the inferior creatures, who are governed by

sense and natural instinct, cannot do. The more shame for him if he do not devise the way how to please God and provide for his everlasting state.

2. But as a depending creature, that is subject to the direction and dominion of his Maker. If men *devise their way*, so as to make God's glory their end and his will their rule, they may expect that he will *direct their steps* by his Spirit and grace, so that they shall not miss their way nor come short of their end. But let men devise their worldly affairs ever so politely, and with ever so great a probability of success, yet God has the ordering of the event, and sometimes *directs their steps* to that which they least intended. The design of this is to teach us to say, *If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that* (~~SOUL~~ James 4:14, 15), and to have our eye to God, not only in the great turns of our lives, but in every step we take. *Lord, direct my way,* ~~SOUL~~ 1 Thessalonians 3:11.

~~SOUL~~ PROVERBS 16:10

THE DUTIES OF KINGS

We wish this were always true as a proposition, and we ought to make it our prayer for kings, and all in authority, that a *divine sentence* may be in their lips, both in giving orders, that they may do that in wisdom, and in giving sentence, that they may do that in equity, both which are included in *judgment*, and that in neither *their mouth may transgress*, ~~SOUL~~ 1 Timothy 2:1. But it is often otherwise; and therefore,

1. it may be read as a precept to the kings and judges of the earth to be wise and instructed. Let them be just, and rule in the fear of God; let them act with such wisdom and conscience that there may appear a holy divination in all they say or do, and that they are guided by principles supernatural: let not their mouths transgress in judgment, for the judgment is God's.

2. It may be taken as a promise to all good kings, that if they sincerely aim at God's glory, and seek direction from him, he will qualify them with wisdom and grace above others, in proportion to the eminency of their station and the trusts lodged in their hands. When Saul himself was made king God gave him another spirit.

3. It was true concerning Solomon who wrote this; he had extraordinary wisdom, pursuant to the promise God made him, See ~~<1K18>~~1 Kings 3:28.

~~<1K11>~~ PROVERBS 16:11

THE DUTIES OF KINGS

Note,

1. The administration of public justice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God; in it the scales are held, and ought to be held by a steady and impartial hand; and we ought to submit to it, for the Lord's sake, and to see his authority in that of the magistrate, ~~<510>~~Romans 13:1; ~~<4013>~~1 Peter 2:13.

2. The observance of justice in commerce between man and man is likewise a divine appointment. He taught men discretion to make scales and weights for the adjusting of right exactly between buyer and seller, that neither may be wronged; and all other useful inventions for the preserving of right are from him. He has also appointed by his law that they be just. It is therefore a great affront to him, and to his government, to falsify, and so to do wrong under colour and pretence of doing right, which is *wickedness in the place of judgment*.

~~<1K12>~~ PROVERBS 16:12

THE DUTIES OF KINGS

Here is,

1. The character of a good king, which Solomon intended not for his own praise, but for instruction to his successors, his neighbours, and the viceroys under him. A good king not only does justice, but it is *an abomination* to him to do otherwise. He hates the thought of doing wrong and perverting justice; he not only abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors to do any himself, though, having power, he might easily and safely do it.

2. The comfort of a good king: His *throne is established by righteousness*. He that makes conscience of using his power aright shall find that to be

the best security of his government, both as it will oblige people, make them easy, and keep them in the interest of it, and as it will obtain the blessing of God, which will be a firm basis to the throne and a strong guard about it.

~~2163~~ PROVERBS 16:13

THE DUTIES OF KINGS

Here is a further character of good kings, that they *love* and *delight* in those that *speak right*.

1. They hate parasites and those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things, that every thing should be set in a true light and nothing disguised, ~~2190~~ Proverbs 29:12.

2. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too, which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governors sent by him, ~~2124~~ 1 Peter 2:14. A good king will therefore put those in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak aright and to the purpose.

~~2164~~ PROVERBS 16:14-15

THE DUTIES OF KINGS

These two verses show the power of kings, which is every where great, but was especially so in those eastern countries, where they were absolute and arbitrary. Whom they would they slew and whom they would they kept alive. Their will was a law. We have reason to bless God for the happy constitution of the government we live under, which maintains the prerogative of the prince without any injury to the liberty of the subject. But here it is intimated,

1. How formidable *the wrath of a king is*: It is *as messengers of death*; the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman. An angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a *messenger of death*, and has struck so great a terror upon some as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. He must be a very *wise man* that knows how to *pacify* the wrath of a king with a word fitly spoken, as Jonathan once pacified his father's rage against David, ¹ Samuel 19:6. A prudent subject may sometimes suggest that to an angry prince which will cool his resentments.

2. How valuable and desirable the king's favour is to those that have incurred his displeasure; it is life from the dead if the king be reconciled to them. To others it is *as a cloud of the latter rain*, very refreshing to the ground. Solomon put his subjects in mind of this, that they might not do any thing to incur his wrath, but be careful to recommend themselves to his favour. We ought by it to be put in mind how much we are concerned to escape the wrath and obtain the favour of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour is better than life; and therefore those are fools who to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour, of an earthly prince, will throw themselves out of God's favour, and make themselves obnoxious to his wrath.

¹⁶⁶PROVERBS 16:16

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Solomon here not only asserts that it is better to get wisdom than gold (¹⁷⁴Proverbs 3:14, 8:19), but he speaks it with assurance, that it is much better, better beyond expression — with admiration (*How much better!*) as one amazed at the disproportion — with an appeal to men's consciences (“Judge in yourselves how much better it is”) — and with an addition to the same purport, that understanding is *rather to be chosen than silver* and all the treasures of kings and their favourites. Note,

1. Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. Grace is more valuable than gold. Grace is the gift of God's peculiar favour; gold only of common providence. Grace is for ourselves; gold for others. Grace is for the soul and eternity; gold only for the body and time. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour, when gold will do us no good.

2. The getting of this heavenly wisdom is better than the getting of worldly wealth. Many take care and pains to get wealth, and yet come short of it; but grace was never denied to any that sincerely sought it. There is vanity and vexation of spirit in getting wealth, but joy and satisfaction of spirit in getting wisdom. *Great peace have those that love it.*

<167> PROVERBS 16:17

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Note,

1. It is *the way of the upright* to avoid sin, and every thing that looks like it and leads towards it; and this is a highway marked out by authority, tracked by many that have gone before us, and in which we meet with many that keep company with us; it is easy to find and safe to be travelled in, like a highway, <358> Isaiah 35:8. *To depart from evil is understanding.*

2. It is the care of the upright to preserve their own souls, that they be not polluted with sin, and that by the troubles of the world they may not be put out of the possession of them, especially that they may not perish for ever, <165> Matthew 16:26. And it is therefore their care to keep their way, and not turn aside out of it, on either hand, but to press towards perfection. Those that adhere to their duty secure their felicity. Keep thy way and God will keep thee.

<168> PROVERBS 16:18

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Note,

1. Pride will have a fall. Those that are of a *haughty spirit*, that think of themselves above what is meet, and look with contempt upon others, that with their pride affront God and disquiet others, will be brought down, either by repentance or by ruin. It is the honour of God to humble the proud, <301> Job 40:11, 12. It is the act of justice that those who have lifted up themselves should be laid low. Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, were instances of this. Men cannot punish pride, but either admire it or

fear it, and therefore God will take the punishing of it into his own hands. Let him alone to deal with proud men.

2. Proud men are frequently most proud, and insolent, and haughty, just before their destruction, so that it is a certain presage that they are upon the brink of it. When proud men set God's judgments at defiance, and think themselves at the greatest distance from them, it is a sign that they are at the door; witness the case of Benhadad and Herod. *While the word was in the king's mouth,* ^{<2068>} Daniel 4:31. Therefore let us not fear the pride of others, but greatly fear pride in ourselves.

~~<2069>~~ PROVERBS 16:19

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

This is a paradox which the children of this world cannot understand and will not subscribe to, that it is better to be poor and humble than to be rich and proud.

1. Those that *divide the spoil* are commonly proud; they value themselves and despise others, and their mind rises with their condition; those therefore that are *rich in this world* have need to be charged that they *be not high-minded,* ^{<3167>} 1 Timothy 6:17. Those that are proud and will put forth themselves, that thrust, and shove, and scramble, for preferment, are the men that commonly *divide the spoil* and share it among them; they have the world at will and the ball at their foot.

2. It is upon all accounts better to take our lot with those whose condition is low, and their minds brought to it, than to covet and aim to make a figure and a bustle in the world. Humility, though it should expose us to contempt in the world, yet while it recommends us to the favour of God, qualifies us for his gracious visits, prepares us for his glory, secures us from many temptations, and preserves the quiet and repose of our own souls, is much better than that high-spiritedness which, though it carry away the honour and wealth of the world, makes God a man's enemy and the devil his master.

~~162~~ PROVERBS 16:20

BENEFITS OF WISDOM

Note,

1. Prudence gains men respect and success: *He that handles a matter wisely* (that is master of his trade and makes it to appear he understands what he undertakes, that is considerate in his affairs, and, when he speaks or writes on any subject, does it pertinently) shall *find good*, shall come into good repute, and perhaps may make a good hand of it.

2. But it is piety only that will secure men's true happiness: Those that *handle a matter wisely*, if they are proud and lean to their own understanding, though they may find some good, yet they will have no great satisfaction in it; but he that *trusts in the Lord*, and not in his own wisdom, *happy is he*, and shall speed better at last. Some read the former part of the verse so as to expound it of piety, which is indeed true wisdom: *He that attends to the word* (the word of God, ~~113~~ Proverbs 13:13) shall *find good* in it and good by it. And whoso *trusts in the Lord*, in his word which he attends to, is happy.

~~162~~ PROVERBS 16:21

BENEFITS OF WISDOM

Note,

1. Those that have solid wisdom will have the credit of it; it will gain them reputation, and they *shall be called prudent* grave men, and a deference will be paid to their judgment. *Do that which is wise and good and thou shalt have the praise of the same.*

2. Those that with their wisdom have a happy elocution, that deliver their sentiments easily and with a good grace, are communicative of their wisdom and have words at will, and good language as well as good sense, *increase learning*; they diffuse and propagate knowledge to others, and do good work with it, and by that means increase their own stock. They add

doctrine, improve sciences, and do service to the commonwealth of learning. *To him that has, and uses what he has, more shall be given.*

~~162~~ PROVERBS 16:22

BENEFITS OF WISDOM

Note,

1. There is always some good to be gotten by a wise and good man: His *understanding is a well-spring of life to him*, which always flows and can never be drawn dry; he has something to say upon all occasions that is instructive, and of use to those that will make use of it, things new and old to bring out of his treasure; at least, his understanding is a *spring of life* to himself, yielding him abundant satisfaction; within his own thoughts he entertains and edifies himself, if not others.
2. There is nothing that is good to be gotten by a fool. Even his instruction, his set and solemn discourses, are but folly, like himself, and tending to make others like him. When he does his best it is but folly, in comparison even with the common talk of a wise man, who speaks better at table than a fool in Moses's seat.

~~163~~ PROVERBS 16:23

BENEFITS OF WISDOM

Solomon had commended eloquence, or *the sweetness of the lips* (v. 21), and seemed to prefer it before wisdom; but here he corrects himself, as it were, and shows that unless there be a good treasure within to support the eloquence it is worth little. Wisdom in *the heart* is the main matter.

1. It is this that directs us in speaking, that *teaches the mouth* what to speak, and when, and how, so that what is spoken may be proper, and pertinent, and seasonable; otherwise, though the language be ever so fine, it had better be unsaid.
2. It is this that gives weight to what we speak and *adds learning* to it, strength of reason and force of argument, without which, let a thing be

ever so well worded, it will be rejected, when it comes to be considered, as trifling. Quaint expressions please the ear, and humour the fancy, but it is learning in the lips that must convince the judgment, and sway that, to which wisdom in the heart is necessary.

~~2162~~ PROVERBS 16:24

BENEFITS OF WISDOM

The *pleasant words* here commended must be those which *the heart of the wise teaches, and adds learning to* (v. 23), words of seasonable advice, instruction, and comfort, words taken from God's word, for that is it which Solomon had learned from his father to account *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*, ~~2163~~ Psalm 19:10. These words, to those that know how to relish them,

1. Are pleasant. They are like the *honey-comb, sweet to the soul*, which tastes in them that *the Lord is gracious*; nothing more grateful and agreeable to the new man than the word of God, and those words which are borrowed from it, ~~2164~~ Psalm 119:103.
2. They are wholesome. Many things are pleasant that are not profitable, but these *pleasant words are health to the bones*, to the inward man, as well as *sweet to the soul*. They make *the bones*, which sin has broken and put out of joint, *to rejoice*. The bones are the strength of the body; and the good word of God is a means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken us.

~~2165~~ PROVERBS 16:25

BENEFITS OF WISDOM

This we had before (~~2162~~ Proverbs 14:12), but here it is repeated, as that which is very necessary to be thought of,

1. By way of caution to us all to take heed of deceiving ourselves in the great concerns of our souls by resting in that which *seems right* and is not

really so, and, for the preventing of a self-delusion, to be impartial in self-examination and keep up a jealousy over ourselves.

2. By way of terror to those whose way is not right, is not as it should be, however it may seem to themselves or others; the end of it will certainly be death; to that it has a direct and certain tendency.

~~166~~ PROVERBS 16:26

BENEFITS OF WISDOM

This is designed to engage us to diligence, and quicken us, *what our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might*, both in our worldly business and in the work of religion; for in the original it is, *The soul that labours labours for itself*. It is heart-work which is here intended, the labour of the soul, which is here recommended to us,

1. As that which will be absolutely needful. Our mouth is continually craving it of us; the necessities both of soul and body are pressing, and require constant relief, so that we must either work or starve. Both call for daily bread, and therefore there must be daily labour; for in the sweat of our face we must eat, ~~580~~ 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

2. As that which will be unspeakably gainful. We know on whose errand we go: *He that labours* shall reap the fruit of his labour; it shall be *for himself*; he shall rejoice in his own work and *eat the labour of his hands*. If we make religion our business, God will make it our blessedness.

~~167~~ PROVERBS 16:27-28

MALICE AND ENVY

There are those that are not only vicious themselves, but spiteful and mischievous to others, and they are the worst of men; two sorts of such are here described: —

1. Such as envy a man the honour of his good name, and do all they can to blast that by calumnies and misrepresentations: They *dig up evil*; they take a great deal of pains to find out something or other on which to ground a

slander, or which may give some colour to it. If none appear above ground, rather than want it they will dig for it, by diving into what is secret, or looking a great way back, or by evil suspicions and surmises, and forced innuendos. In the lips of a slanderer and backbiter *there is as a fire*, not only to brand his neighbour's reputation, to smoke and sully it, but *as a burning fire* to consume it. And how great a matter does a little of this fire kindle, and how hardly is it extinguished! ~~588B~~ James 3:5, 6.

2. Such as envy a man the comfort of his friendship, and do all they can to break that, by suggesting that on both sides which will set those at variance that are most nearly related and have been long intimate, or at least cool and alienate their affections one from another: *A froward man*, that cannot find in his heart to love any body but himself, is vexed to see others live in love, and therefore makes it is his business to *sow strife*, by giving men base characters one of another, telling lies, and carrying ill-natured stories between *chief friends*, so as to *separate* them one from another, and make them angry at or at least suspicious of one another. Those are bad men, and bad women too, that do such ill offices; they are doing the devil's work, and his will their wages be.

~~169~~ PROVERBS 16:29-30

MALICE AND ENVY

Here is another sort of evil men described to us, that we may neither do like them, nor have any thing to do with them.

1. Such as (like Satan) do all the mischief they can by force and violence, as roaring lions, and not only by fraud and insinuation, as subtle serpents: They are *violent men*, that do all by rapine and oppression, that *shut their eyes*, meditating with the closest intention and application of mind *to devise froward things*, to contrive how they may do the greatest mischief to their neighbour, to do it effectually and yet securely to themselves; and then *moving their lips*, giving the word of command to their agents, they *bring the evil to pass*, and accomplish the wicked device, *biting his lips* (so some read it) for vexation. When *the wicked plots against the just he gnasheth upon him with his teeth*.

2. Such as (like Satan still) do all they can to *entice* and draw in others to join with them in doing mischief, *leading them in a way that is not good*, that is not honest, nor honourable, nor safe, but offensive to God, and which will be in the end pernicious to the sinner. Thus he aims to ruin some in this world by bringing them into trouble, and others in the other world by bringing them into sin.

PROVERBS 16:31

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCES

Note,

1. It ought to be the great care of old people to *be found in the way of righteousness*, the way of religion and serious godliness. Both God and man will look for them in that way; it will be expected that those that are old should be good, that the multitude of their years should teach them the best wisdom; let them therefore be found in that way. Death will come; the Judge is coming; *the Lord is at hand*. That they may *be found of him in peace*, let them *be found in the way of righteousness* (¹⁶¹⁴2 Peter 3:14), *found so doing*, (¹²⁴⁵Matthew 24:46). Let old people be old disciples; let them persevere to the end *in the way of righteousness*, which they long since set out in, that they may then be found in it.

2. If old people *be found in the way of righteousness*, their age will be their honour. Old age, as such, is honourable, and commands respect (*Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head*, ¹⁶¹³Leviticus 19:32); but, if it be found in the way of wickedness, its honour is forfeited, its crown profaned and laid in the dust, (²⁵¹⁰Isaiah 65:20). Old people therefore, if they would preserve their honour, must still hold fast their integrity, and then their gray hairs are indeed *a crown* to them; they are *worthy of double honour*. Grace is the glory of old age.

PROVERBS 16:32

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCES

This recommends the grace of meekness to us, which will well become us all, particularly *the hoary head*, v. 31. Observe,

1. The nature of it. it is to be *slow to anger*, not easily put into a passion, nor apt to resent provocation, taking time to consider before we suffer our passion to break out, that it may not transgress due bounds, so slow in our motions towards anger that we may be quickly stopped and pacified. It is to have the rule of our own spirits, our appetites and affections, and all our inclinations, but particularly our passions, our anger, keeping that under direction and check, and the strict government of religion and right reason. We must be *lords of our anger*, as God is, Nahum 1:3. *Aeolus sis, affectuum tuorum* — *Rule your passions, as Aeolus rules the winds.*
2. The honour of it. He that gets and keeps the mastery of his passions is *better than the mighty*, better than *he that by a long siege takes a city* or by a long war subdues a country. Behold, a greater than Alexander or Caesar is here. The conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions, requires more true wisdom, and a more steady, constant, and regular management, than the obtaining of a victory over the forces of an enemy. A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than a brutal one. It is a victory that does nobody any harm; no lives or treasures are sacrificed to it, but only some base lusts. It is harder, and therefore more glorious, to quash an insurrection at home than to resist an invasion from a broad; nay, such are the gains of meekness that by it *we are more than conquerors.*

PROVERBS 16:33

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCES

Note,

1. The divine Providence orders and directs those things which to us are perfectly casual and fortuitous. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is an event determined by a blind fortune, but every thing by the will and

counsel of God. What man has neither eye nor hand in God is intimately concerned in.

2. When solemn appeals are made to Providence by the casting of lots, for the deciding of that matter of moment which could not otherwise be at all, or not so well, decided, God must be eyed in it, by prayer, that it may be disposed aright (*Give a perfect lot*, ~~1041~~ 1 Samuel 14:41; ~~102~~ Acts 1:24), and by acquiescing in it when it is disposed, being satisfied that the hand of God is in it and that hand directed by infinite wisdom. All the disposals of Providence concerning our affairs we must look upon to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly.