

CHAPTER 21

<11> PROVERBS 21:1

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. Even the *hearts* of men are in God's hand, and not only their *goings*, as he had said, <11> Proverbs 20:24. God can change men's minds, can, by a powerful insensible operation under their spirits, turn them from that which they seemed most intent upon, and incline them to that which they seemed most averse to, as the husbandman, by canals and gutters, turns the water through his grounds as he pleases, which does not alter the nature of the water, nor put any force upon it, any more than God's providence does upon the native freedom of man's will, but directs the course of it to serve his own purpose.

2. Even kings' hearts are so, notwithstanding their powers and prerogatives, as much as the hearts of common persons. The *hearts of kings are unsearchable* to us, much more unmanageable by us; as they have their *arcana imperii* — *state secrets*, so that they have great prerogatives of their crown; but the great God has them not only under his eye, but in his hand. Kings are what he makes them. Those that are most absolute are under God's government; he *puts things into their hearts*, <67> Revelation 17:17; <112> Ezra 7:27.

<11> PROVERBS 21:2

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves and our own actions, and to think too favourably of our own character, as if there was nothing amiss in it: *Every way of a man, even his by-way, is right in his own eyes.*

The proud heart is very ingenious in putting a fair face upon a foul matter, and in making that appear right to itself which is far from being so, to stop the mouth of conscience.

2. We are sure that the judgment of God concerning us is according to truth. Whatever our judgment is concerning ourselves, *the Lord ponders the heart*. God looks at the heart, and judges of men according to that, of their actions according to their principles and intentions; and his judgment of that is as exact as ours is of that which we ponder most, and more so; he weighs it in an unerring balance, ^{<3162>}Proverbs 16:2.

^{<3118>}PROVERBS 21:3

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here,

1. It is implied that many deceive themselves with a conceit that, if they offer sacrifice, that will excuse them from doing justice, and procure them a dispensation for their unrighteousness; and this makes their way *seem right*, v. 2. *We have fasted*, ^{<2583>}Isaiah 58:3. *I have peace-offerings with me*, ^{<3174>}Proverbs 7:14.

2. It is plainly declared that living a good life (doing justly and loving mercy) is more pleasing to God than the most pompous and expensive instances of devotion. Sacrifices were of divine institution, and were acceptable to God if they were offered in faith and with repentance, otherwise not, ^{<2011>}Isaiah 1:11, etc. But even then moral duties were preferred before them (^{<0652>}1 Samuel 15:22), which intimates that their excellency was not innate nor the obligation to them perpetual, ^{<3166>}Micah 6:6-8. Much of religion lies in doing judgment and justice from a principle of duty to God, contempt of the world, and love to our neighbour; and this is more pleasing to God than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, ^{<4123>}Mark 12:33.

^{<3118>}PROVERBS 21:4

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This may be taken as showing us,

1. The marks of a wicked man. He that has a *high look and a proud heart*, that carries himself insolently and scornfully towards both God and man, and that is always ploughing and plotting, designing and devising some mischief or other, is indeed a wicked man. *The light of the wicked is sin.* Sin is *the pride, the ambition, the glory and joy, and the business of wicked men.*

2. The miseries of wicked man. His raised expectations, his high designs, and most elaborate contrivances and projects, are sin to him; he contracts guilt in them and so prepares trouble for himself. The very business of all wicked men, as well as their pleasure, is nothing but sin; so Bishop Patrick. They do all to serve their lusts, and have no regard to the glory of God in it, and therefore *their ploughing is sin*, and no marvel when their sacrificing is so, ^{<18>}Proverbs 15:8.

^{<18>}PROVERBS 21:5

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is,

1. The way to be rich. If we would live plentifully and comfortably in the world, we must be diligent in our business, and not shrink from the toil and trouble of it, but prosecute it closely, improving all advantages and opportunities for it, and doing what we do with all our might; yet we must not be hasty in it, nor hurry ourselves and others with it, but keep doing fair and softly, which, we say, goes far in a day. With diligence there must be contrivance. The *thoughts of the diligent* are as necessary as the hand of the diligent. Forecast is as good as work. Seest thou a man thus prudent and diligent? He will have enough to live on.

2. The way to be poor. Those that are hasty, that are rash and inconsiderate in their affairs, and will not take time to think, that are greedy of gain, by right or wrong, and make haste to be rich by unjust practices or unwise projects, are in the ready road to poverty. Their thoughts and contrivances, by which they hope to raise themselves, will ruin them.

~~21:6~~ PROVERBS 21:6

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This shows the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and over-reaching those with whom they deal, by false-witness-bearing, or by fraudulent contracts, of those that make no scruples of lying when there is any thing to be got by it. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but,

1. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect. It is a *vanity tossed to and fro*; it will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, nor can they put any confidence in it, but will be perpetually uneasy. It will be *tossed to and fro* by their own consciences, and by the censures of men; let them expect to be in a constant hurry.

2. They will meet with destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices they are really seeking death; they lay themselves open to the envy and ill-will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God, by the lying tongue wherewith they get them, which he will make to fall upon themselves and sink them to hell.

~~21:7~~ PROVERBS 21:7

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here,

1. The nature of injustice. Getting money by lying (v. 6) is no better than downright robbery. Cheating is stealing; you might as well pick a man's pocket as impose upon him by a lie in making a bargain, which he had no fence against but by not believing you; and it will be no excuse from the guilt of robbery to say that he might choose whether he would believe you, for that is a debt we should owe to all men.

2. The cause of injustice. Men *refuse to do judgment*; they will not render to all their due, but withhold it, and omissions make way for commissions;

they come at length to robbery itself. Those that refuse to do justice will choose to do wrong.

3. The effects of injustice; it will return upon the sinner's own head. The robbery of the wicked will *terrify them* (so some); their consciences will be filled with horror and amazement, will cut them, will *saw them asunder* (so others); it will *destroy them* here and for ever, therefore he had said (v. 6), *They seek death*.

~~<1118>~~ PROVERBS 21:8

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This shows that as men are so is their way.

1. Evil men have evil ways. If the man be *froward*, his way also is *strange*; and this is the way of most men, such is the general corruption of mankind. *They have all gone aside* (~~<1142>~~ Psalm 14:2, 3); all flesh have perverted their way. But the froward man, the man of deceit, that acts by craft and trick in all he does, his way is strange, contrary to all the rules of honour and honesty. It is strange, for you know not where to find him nor when you have him; it is strange, for it is alienated from all good and estranges men from God and his favour. It is what he behold afar off, and so do all honest men.

2. Men that are pure are proved to be such by their work, for it *is right*, it is just and regular; and they are accepted of God and approved of men. The way of mankind in their apostasy is froward and strange; but as for the pure, those that by the grace of God are recovered out of that state, of which there is here and there one, *their work is right*, as Noah's was in the old world, ~~<1111>~~ Genesis 7:1.

~~<1119>~~ PROVERBS 21:9

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here,

1. What a great affliction it is to a man to have a brawling scolding woman for his wife, who upon every occasion, and often upon no occasion, breaks out into a passion, and chides either him or those about her, is fretful to herself and furious to her children and servants, and, in both, vexatious to her husband. If a man has a wide house, spacious and pompous, this will embitter the comfort of it to him — *a house of society* (so the word is), in which a man may be sociable, and entertain his friends; this will make both him and his house unsociable, and unfit for enjoyments of true friendship. It makes a man ashamed of his choice and his management, and disturbs his company.

2. What many a man is forced to do under such an affliction. He cannot keep up his authority. He finds it to no purpose to contradict the most unreasonable passion, for it is unruly and rages so much the more; and his wisdom and grace will not suffer him to render railing for railing, nor his conjugal affection to use any severity, and therefore he finds it his best way to retire *into a corner of the house-top*, and sit alone there, out of the hearing of her clamour; and if he employ himself well there, as he may do, it is the wisest course he can take. Better do so than quit the house, and go into bad company, for diversion, as many, who, like Adam, make their wife's sin the excuse of their own.

~~AND~~ PROVERBS 21:10

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here the character of a very wicked man.

1. The strong inclination he has to do mischief. His very *soul desires evil*, desires that evil may be done and that he may have the pleasure, not only of seeing it, but of having a hand in it. The root of wickedness lies in the soul; the desire that men have to do evil, that is the lust which conceives and brings forth sin.

2. The strong aversion he has to do good: *His neighbour*, his friend, his nearest relation, *finds no favour in his eyes*, cannot gain from him the least kindness, though he be in the greatest need of it. And, when he is in the pursuit of the evil his heart is so much upon, he will spare no man that

stands in his way; his next neighbour shall be used no better than a stranger, than an enemy.

~~3111~~ PROVERBS 21:11

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This we had before (~~3125~~ Proverbs 19:25), and it shows that there are two ways by which the simple may be made wise: —

1. By the punishments that are inflicted on those that are incorrigibly wicked. Let the law be executed upon a scorner, and even he that is simple will be awakened and alarmed by it, and will discern, more than he did, the evil of sin, and will take warning by it and take heed.
2. By the instructions that are given to those that are wise and willing to be taught: *When the wise is instructed* by the preaching of the word *he* (not only the wise himself, but the simple that stands by) *receives knowledge*. It is no injustice at all to take a good lesson to ourselves which was designed for another.

~~3112~~ PROVERBS 21:12

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

1. As we read this verse, it shows why good men, when they come to understand things aright, will not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. When they see *the house of the wicked*, how full it is perhaps of all the good things of this life, they are tempted to envy; but when they *wisely consider* it, when they look upon it with an eye of faith, when they see *God overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness*, that there is a curse upon their habitation which will certainly be the ruin of it ere long, they see more reason to despise them, or pity them, than to fear or envy them.
2. Some give another sense of it: *The righteous man* (the judge or magistrate, that is entrusted with the execution of justice, and the preservation of public peace) *examines the house of the wicked*, searches it for arms or for stolen goods, makes a diligent enquiry concerning his

family and the characters of those about him, that he may by his power *overthrow the wicked for their wickedness* and prevent their doing any further mischief, that he may fire the nests where the birds of prey are harboured or the unclean birds.

~~3213~~ PROVERBS 21:13

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here we have the description and doom of an uncharitable man.

1. His description: He *stops his ears at the cry of the poor*, at the cry of their wants and miseries (he resolves to take no cognizance of them), at the cry of their requests and supplications — he resolves he will not so much as give them the hearing, turns them away from his door, and forbids them to come near him, or, if he cannot avoid hearing them, he will not need them, nor be moved by their complaints, nor be prevailed with by their importunities; he *shuts up the bowels of his compassion*, and that is equivalent to the stopping of his ears, ~~415~~Acts 7:57.

2. His doom. He shall himself be reduced to straits, which will make him *cry*, and then *he shall not be heard*. Men will not hear him, but reward him as he has rewarded others. God will not hear him; for he that *showed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy* (~~3213~~James 2:13), and he that on earth denied a crumb of bread in hell was denied a drop of water. God will be deaf to the prayers of those who are deaf to the cries of the poor, which, if they be not heard by us, will be heard against us, ~~1223~~Exodus 22:23.

~~3214~~ PROVERBS 21:14

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is,

1. The power that is commonly found to be in gifts. Nothing is more violent than *anger*. O the force of *strong wrath!* And yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some men's wrath when it seemed implacable, and disarm the keenest and most passionate

resentments. Covetousness is commonly a master-sin and has the command of other lusts. *Pecuniae obediunt omnia* — *Money commands all things*. Thus Jacob pacified Esau and Abigail David.

2. The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes. It must be a *gift in secret and a reward in the bosom*, for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended with; but, if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor boast of the presents he sends; but, if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it.

PROVERBS 21:15

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men both to see justice administered by the government they live under, right taking place and iniquity suppressed, and also to practise it themselves, according as their sphere is. They not only do justice, but do it with pleasure, not only for fear of shame, but for love of virtue.

2. It is a terror to wicked men to see the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness. It is destruction to them; as it is also a vexation to them to be forced, either for the support of their credit or for fear of punishment, *to do judgment* themselves. Or, if we take it as we read it, the meaning is, There is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction at the end of all vicious courses.

PROVERBS 21:16

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is,

1. The sinner upon his ramble: He *wanders out of the way of understanding*, and when once he has left that good way he wanders

endlessly. The way of religion is *the way of understanding*; those that are not truly pious are not truly intelligent; those *that wander out of this way* break the hedge which God has set, and follow the conduct of the world and the flesh; and they go astray like lost sheep.

2. The sinner at his rest, or rather his ruin: He *shall remain (quiescet — he shall rest, but not in pace — in peace) in the congregation of the giants*, the sinners of the old world, that were swept away by the deluge; to that destruction the damnation of sinners is compared, as sometimes to the destruction of Sodom, when they are said to have their portion in fire and brimstone. Or *in the congregation of the damned*, that are under the power of the second death. There is a vast congregation of damned sinners, bound in bundles for the fire, and in that those shall remain, remain for ever, who are shut out from the congregation of the righteous. He that forsakes the way to heaven, if he return not to it, will certainly sink into the depths of hell.

PROVERBS 21:17

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is an argument against a voluptuous luxurious life, taken from the ruin it brings upon men's temporal interests. Here is

1. The description of an epicure: *He loves pleasure*. God allows us to use the delights of sense soberly and temperately, *wine to make glad the heart* and put vigour into the spirits, and *oil to make the face to shine* and beautify the countenance; but he that loves these, that sets his heart upon them, covets them earnestly, is solicitous to have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable, is impatient of every thing that crosses him in his pleasures, relishes these as the best pleasures, and has his mouth by them put out of taste for spiritual delights, he is an epicure, ² Timothy 3:4.

2. The punishment of an epicure in this world: *He shall be a poor man*; for the lusts of sensuality are not maintained but at great expense, and there are instances of those who want necessaries, and live upon alms, who once could not live without dainties and varieties. Many a beau becomes a beggar.

~~218~~ PROVERBS 21:18

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This intimates,

- 1.** What should be done by the justice of men: *The wicked*, that are the troublers of a land, ought to be punished, for the preventing and turning away of those national judgments which otherwise will be inflicted and in which even the righteous are many times involved. Thus when Achan was stoned he was *a ransom for the camp of righteous Israel*; and the seven sons of Saul, when they were hanged, were *a ransom for the kingdom of righteous David*.
- 2.** What is often done by the providence of God: *The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead*, and so seems as if he were *a ransom for him*, ~~218~~ Proverbs 11:8. God will rather leave many wicked people to be cut off than abandon his own people. *I will give men for thee*, ~~248~~ Isaiah 43:3, 4.

~~219~~ PROVERBS 21:19

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

- 1.** Unbridled passions embitter and spoil the comfort of all relations. A peevish angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and a meet help. Those cannot dwell in peace and happiness that cannot dwell in peace and love. Even those that are one flesh, if they be not withal one spirit, have no joy of their union.
- 2.** It is better to have no company than bad company. The wife of thy covenant is thy companion, and yet, if she be peevish and provoking, *it is better to dwell in a solitary wilderness*, exposed to wind and weather, than in company with her. A man may better enjoy God and himself in a wilderness than among quarrelsome relations and neighbours. See v. 9.

~~311~~ PROVERBS 21:20

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. Those that are wise will increase what they have and live plentifully; their wisdom will teach them to proportion their expenses to their income and to lay up for hereafter; so that *there is a treasure of things to be desired*, and as much as needs be desired, a good stock of all things convenient, laid up in season, and particularly of *oil*, one of the staple commodities of Canaan, ~~488~~ Deuteronomy 8:8. This is *in the habitation*, or cottage, *of the wise*; and it is better to have an old-fashioned house, and have it well furnished, than a fine modern one, with sorry housekeeping. God blesses the endeavors of the wise and then their houses are replenished.
2. Those that are foolish will misspend what they have upon their lusts, and so bring the stock they have to nothing. Those manage wretchedly that are in haste to spend what they had, but not in care which way to get more. Foolish children spend what their wise parents have laid up. *One sinner destroys much good*, as the prodigal son.

~~312~~ PROVERBS 21:21

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here,

1. What it is to make religion our business; it is to *follow after righteousness and mercy*, not to content ourselves with easy performances, but to do our duty with the utmost care and pains, as those that are pressing forward and in fear of coming short. We must both do justly and love mercy, and must proceed and persevere therein; and, though we cannot attain to perfection, yet it will be a comfort to us if we aim at it and follow after it.
2. What will be the advantage of doing so: Those that do *follow after righteousness* shall *find righteousness*; God will give them grace to do

good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of doing it; those that make conscience of being just to others shall have the pleasure and comfort of doing it; those that make conscience of being just to others shall be justly dealt with by others and others shall be kind to them. The Jews followed after righteousness, and did not find it, because they sought amiss, ~~402~~Romans 9:31. Otherwise, *Seek and you shall find*, and with it shall find both *life and honour*, everlasting life and honour, the *crown of righteousness*.

~~402~~PROVERBS 21:22

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. Those that have power are apt to promise themselves great things from their power. *The city of the mighty* thinks itself impregnable, and therefore its strength is *the confidence thereof*, what it boasts of and trust in, bidding defiance to danger.
2. Those that have wisdom, though they are so modest as not to promise much, often perform great things, even against those that are so confident of their strength, by their wisdom. Good conduct will go far even against great force; and a stratagem, well managed, may effectually *scale the city of the mighty and cast down the strength* it had such a confidence in. A *wise man* will gain upon the affections of people and conquer them by strength of reason, which is a more noble conquest than that obtained by strength of arms. Those that understand their interest will willingly submit themselves to a wise and good man, and the strongest walls shall not hold out against him.

~~402~~PROVERBS 21:23

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. It is our great concern to keep our souls from straits, being entangled in snares and perplexities, and disquieted with troubles, that we may preserve the possession and enjoyment of ourselves and that our souls may be in frame for the service of God.

2. Those that would keep their souls must keep a watch before the door of their lips, must *keep the mouth* by temperance, that no forbidden fruit go into it, no stolen waters, that nothing be eaten or drunk to excess; they must *keep the tongue* also, that no forbidden word go out of the door of the lips, no corrupt communication. By a constant watchfulness over our words we shall prevent abundance of mischiefs which an ungoverned tongue runs men into. Keep thy heart, and that will keep thy tongue from sin; keep thy tongue, and that will keep thy heart from trouble.

~~3124~~ PROVERBS 21:24

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here the mischief of pride and haughtiness.

1. It exposes men to sin; it makes them passionate, and kindles in them the fire of *proud wrath*. They are continually dealing in it, as if it were their trade to be angry, and they had nothing so much to do as to barter passions and exchange bitter words. Most of the wrath that inflames the spirits and societies of men is *proud wrath*. Men cannot bear the least slight, nor in any thing to be crossed or contradicted, but they are out of humour, nay, in a heat, immediately. It likewise makes them scornful when they are angry, very abusive with their tongues, insolent towards those above them and imperious towards all about them. *Only by pride* comes all this.

2. It exposes men to shame. They get a bad name by it, and every one calls them *proud and haughty scorners*, and therefore nobody cares for having any thing to do with them. If men would but consult their reputation a little and the credit of their profession, which suffers with it, they would not indulge their pride and passion as they do.

~~21:25~~ PROVERBS 21:25-26

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here we have,

1. The miseries of the slothful, whose *hands refuse to labour* in an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood. They are as fit for labour as other men, and business offers itself, to which they might lay their hands and apply their minds, but they will not; herein they fondly think they do well for themselves, see ~~21:16~~ Proverbs 26:16. *Soul, take thy ease*. But really they are enemies to themselves; for, besides that their slothfulness starves them, depriving them of their necessary supports, their desires at the same time stab them. Though their hands refuse to labour, their hearts cease not to covet riches, and pleasures, and honours, which yet cannot be obtained without labour. Their desires are impetuous and insatiable; they *covet greedily all the day long*, and cry, *Give, give*; they expect every body should do for them, though they will do nothing for themselves, much less for any body else. Now these *desires kill them*; they are a perpetual vexation to them, fret them to death, and perhaps put them upon such dangerous courses for the satisfying of their craving lusts as hasten them to an untimely end. Many that must have money with which to make provision for the flesh, and would not be at the pains to get it honestly, have turned highwaymen, and that has killed them. Those that are slothful in the affairs of their souls, and yet have desires towards that which would be the happiness of their souls, those *desires kill them*, will aggravate their condemnation and be witnesses against them that were convinced of the worth of spiritual blessings, but refused to be at the pains that were necessary to the obtaining of them.

2. The honours of the honest and diligent. The righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied, and enjoy not only that satisfaction, but the further satisfaction of doing good to others. The slothful are always craving and gaping to receive, *but the righteous* are always full and contriving to give; and *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. They *give and spare not*, give liberally and upbraid not; they *give a portion to seven and also to eight*, and do not spare for fear of wanting.

~~317~~ PROVERBS 21:27

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Sacrifices were of divine institution; and when they were offered in faith, and with repentance and reformation, God was greatly honoured by them and well-pleased in them. But they were often not only unacceptable, but an *abomination*, to God, and he declared so, which was an indication both that they were not required for their own sakes and that there were better things, and for effectual, in reserve, when sacrifice and offering should be done away. They were an *abomination*,

1. When they were brought by wicked men, who did not, according to the true intent and meaning of sacrificing, repent of their sins, mortify their lusts, and amend their lives. Cain brought his offering. Even wicked men may be found in the external performances of religious worship. Many can freely give God their beasts, their lips, their knees, who would not give him their hearts; the Pharisees gave alms. But when the person is an *abomination*, as every wicked man is to God, the performance cannot but be so; *even when he brings it diligently*; so some read the latter part of the verse. Though their offerings are continually before God (~~408~~ Psalm 50:8), yet they are an abomination to him.

2. *Much more when* they were brought with *wicked minds*, when their sacrifices were made, not only consistent with, but serviceable to, their wickedness, as Absalom's vow, Jezebel's fast, and the Pharisees' long prayers. When men make a show of devotion, that they may the more easily and effectually compass some covetous or malicious design, when holiness is pretended, but some wickedness intended, then especially the performance is an abomination, ~~266~~ Isaiah 66:5.

~~318~~ PROVERBS 21:28

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is,

1. The doom of a *false witness*. He who, for favour to one side or malice to the other, gives in a false evidence, or makes an affidavit of that which

he knows to be false, or at least does not know to be true, if it be discovered, his reputation will be ruined. A man may tell a lie perhaps in his haste; but he that gives a false testimony does it with deliberation and solemnity, and it cannot but be a presumptuous sin, and a forfeiture of man's credit. But, though he should not be discovered, he himself shall be ruined; the vengeance he imprecated upon himself, when he took the false oath, will come upon him.

2. The praise of him that is conscientious: He *who hears* (that is, obeys) the command of God, which is to *speak every man truth with his neighbour*, he who testifies nothing but what he has heard and knows to be true, *speaks constantly* (that is, consistently with himself); he is always in the same story; he speaks *in finem* — *to the end*; people will give credit to him and hear him out; he speaks unto victory; he carries the cause, which the *false witness* shall lose; he shall speak to eternity. What is true is true eternally. *The lip of truth is established for ever.*

~~317~~ PROVERBS 21:29

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is,

1. The presumption and impudence of a wicked man: He *hardens his face* — brazens it, that he may not blush — steels it, that he may not tremble when he commits the greatest crimes; he bids defiance to the terrors of the law and the checks of his own conscience, the reproofs of the word and the rebukes of Providence; he will have his way and nothing shall hinder him, ~~257~~ Isaiah 57:17.

2. The caution and circumspection of a good man: *As for the upright*, he does not say, What *would* I do? What have I a mind to? and that will I have; but, What *should* I do? What does God require of me? What is duty? What is prudence? What is for edification? And so he does not force his way, but *direct his way* by a safe and certain rule.

PROVERBS 21:30-31

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

The designing busy part of mankind are directed, in all their counsels and undertakings, to have their eye to God, and to believe, 1. That there can be no success against God, and therefore they must never act in opposition to him, in contempt of his commands, or in contradiction to his counsels. Though they think they have *wisdom*, and *understanding*, and *counsel*, the best politics and politicians, on their side, yet, if it be *against the Lord*, it cannot prosper long; it shall not prevail at last. He that sits in heaven laughs at men's projects against him and his anointed, and will carry his point in spite of them, ^{<111>}Psalm 2:1-6. Those that fight against God are preparing shame and ruin for themselves; whoever *make war with the Lamb*, he will certainly *overcome them*, ^{<174>}Revelation 17:14.

2. That there can be no success without God, and therefore they must never act but in dependence on him. Be the cause ever so good, and the patrons of it ever so strong, and wise, and faithful, and the means of carrying it on, and gaining the point, ever so probable, still they must acknowledge God and take him along with them. Means indeed are to be used; *the horse* must be *prepared against the day of battle*, and the foot too; they must be armed and disciplined. In Solomon's time even Israel's kings used horses in war, though they were forbidden to multiply them. *But*, after all, *safety* and *salvation are of the Lord*; he can save without armies, but armies cannot save without him; and therefore he must be sought to and trusted in for success, and when success is obtained he must have all the glory. When we are preparing for *the day of battle* our great concern must be to make God our friend and secure his favour.