

# CHAPTER 15

Perhaps Job was so clear, and so well satisfied, in the goodness of his own cause, that he thought, if he had not convinced, yet he had at least silenced all his three friends; but, it seems he had not: in this chapter they begin a second attack upon him, each of them charging him afresh with as much vehemence as before. It is natural to us to be fond of our own sentiments, and therefore to be firm to them, and with difficulty to be brought to recede from them. Eliphaz here keeps close to the principles upon which he had condemned Job, and,

**I.** He reproves him for justifying himself, and fathers on him many evil things which are unfairly inferred thence (v. 2-13).

**II.** He persuades him to humble himself before God and to take shame to himself (v. 14-16).

**III.** He reads him a long lecture concerning the woeful estate of wicked people, who harden their hearts against God and the judgments which are prepared for them (v. 17-35). A good use may be made both of his reproofs (for they are plain) and of his doctrine (for it is sound), though both the one and the other are misapplied to Job.

## <del>JOB 15:1-16

### SECOND ADDRESS OF ELIPHAZ

Eliphaz here falls very foul upon Job, because he contradicted what he and his colleagues had said, and did not acquiesce in it and applaud it, as they expected. Proud people are apt thus to take it very much amiss if they may not have leave to dictate and give law to all about them, and to censure those as ignorant and obstinate, and all that is naught, who cannot in every thing say as they say. Several great crimes Eliphaz here charges Job with, only because he would not own himself a hypocrite.

**I.** He charges him with folly and absurdity (v. 2, 3), that, whereas he had been reputed a wise man, he had now quite forfeited his reputation; any one would say that his wisdom had departed from him, he talked so

extravagantly and so little to the purpose. Bildad began thus (~~xxx~~ Job 8:2), and Zophar, ~~xix~~ Job 11:2, 3. It is common for angry disputants thus to represent one another's reasonings as impertinent and ridiculous more than there is cause, forgetting the doom of him that calls his brother *Raca*, and *Thou fool*. It is true,

1. That there is in the world a great deal of vain knowledge, science falsely so called, that is useless, and therefore worthless.
2. That this is the knowledge that puffs up, with which men swell in a fond conceit of their own accomplishments.
3. That, whatever vain knowledge a man may have in his head, if he would be thought a wise man he must not utter it, but let it die with himself as it deserves.
4. Unprofitable talk is evil talk. We must give an account in the great day not only for wicked words, but for idle words. Speeches therefore which do no good, which do no service either to God or our neighbour, or no justice to ourselves, which are no way to the use of edifying, were better unspoken. Those words which are as wind, light and empty, especially which are as the east wind, hurtful and pernicious, it will be pernicious to fill either ourselves or others with, for they will pass very ill in the account.
5. Vain knowledge or unprofitable talk ought to be reprov'd and checked, especially in a wise man, whom it worst becomes and who does most hurt by the bad example of it.

**II.** He charges him with impiety and irreligion (v. 4): "*Thou castest off fear,*" that is, "the fear of God, and that regard to him which thou shouldst have; and then *thou restrainest prayer.*" See what religion is summed up in, fearing God and praying to him, the former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is no good is to be expected; and those who live without prayer certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer do thereby give evidence that they cast off fear. Surely those have no reverence of God's majesty, no dread of his wrath, and are in no care about their souls and eternity, who make no applications to God for his grace. Those who are prayerless are fearless and graceless. When the fear of God is cast off all sin is let in and a door opened to all manner of profaneness. It is especially bad with those who

have had some fear of God, but have now cast it off — have been frequent in prayer, but now restrain it. How have they fallen! How is their first love lost! It denotes a kind of force put upon themselves. The fear of God would cleave to them, but they throw it off; prayer would be uttered, but they restrain it; and, in both, they baffle their convictions. Those who either omit prayer or straiten and abridge themselves in it, quenching the spirit of adoption and denying themselves the liberty they might take in the duty, restrain prayer. This is bad enough, but it is worse to restrain others from prayer, to prohibit and discourage prayer, as Darius, <sup><OR></sup> Daniel 6:7. Now,

1. Eliphaz charges this upon Job, either,

(1.) As that which was his own practice. He thought that Job talked of God with such liberty as if he had been his equal, and that he charged him so vehemently with hard usage of him, and challenged him so often to a fair trial, that he had quite thrown off all religious regard to him. This charge was utterly false, and yet wanted not some colour. We ought not only to take care that we keep up prayer and the fear of God, but that we never drop any unwary expressions which may give occasion to those who seek occasion to question our sincerity and constancy in religion. Or,

(2.) As that which others would infer from the doctrine he maintained. “If this be true” (thinks Eliphaz) “which Job says, that a man may be thus sorely afflicted and yet be a good man, then farewell all religion, farewell prayer and the fear of God. If all things come alike to all, and the best men may have the worst treatment in this world, every one will be ready to say, *It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it to keep his ordinances?*

<sup><OR></sup> Malachi 3:14. *Verily I have cleansed my hands in vain,* <sup><OR></sup> Psalm 73:13, 14. Who will be honest if the tabernacles of robbers prosper? ch. 12:6. If there be no forgiveness with God (ch. 7:21), who will fear him? <sup><OR></sup> Psalm 130:4. If he *laugh at the trial of the innocent* (ch. 9:23), if he be so difficult of access (ch. 9:32), who will pray to him?” Note, It is a piece of injustice which even wise and good men are too often guilty of, in the heat of disputation, to charge upon their adversaries those consequences of their opinions which are not fairly drawn from them and which really they abhor. This is not doing as we would be done by.

2. Upon this strained innuendo Eliphaz grounds that high charge of impiety (v. 5): *Thy mouth utters thy iniquity — teaches it*, so the word is. “Thou teachest others to have the same hard thoughts of God and religion

that thou thyself hast.” It is bad to *break even the least of the commandments*, but worse to *teach men so*, <sup><4159></sup>Matthew 5:19. If we ever thought evil, let us lay our hand upon our mouth to suppress the evil thought (<sup><4182></sup>Proverbs 30:32), and let us by no means utter it; that is putting an *imprimatur* to it, publishing it with allowance, to the dishonour of God and the damage of others. Observe, When men have cast off fear and prayer their mouths utter iniquity. Those that cease to do good soon learn to do evil. What can we expect but all manner of iniquity from those that arm not themselves with the grace of God against it? But *thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty*, that is, “Thou utterest thy iniquity with some show and pretence of piety, mixing some good words with the bad, as tradesmen do with their wares to help them off.” The mouth of iniquity could not do so much mischief as it does without the tongue of the crafty. The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety. See <sup><5163></sup>Romans 16:18. The tongue of the crafty speaks with design and deliberation; and therefore those that use it may be said to *choose* it, as that which will serve their purpose better than the tongue of the upright: but it will be found, at last, that honesty is the best policy. Eliphaz, in his first discourse, had proceeded against Job upon mere surmise (<sup><3046></sup>Job 4:6, 7), but now he has got proof against him from his own discourses (v. 6): *Thy own mouth condemns thee, and not I*. But he should have considered that he and his fellows had provoked him to say that which now they took advantage of; and that was not fair. Those are most effectually condemned that are condemned by themselves, <sup><5181></sup>Titus 3:11; <sup><5122></sup>Luke 19:22. Many a man needs no more to sink him than for his own tongue to fall upon him.

**III.** He charges him with intolerable arrogancy and self-conceitedness. It was a just, and reasonable, and modest demand that Job had made (<sup><5123></sup>Job 12:3), Allow that *I have understanding as well as you*; but see how they seek occasion against him: that is misconstrued, as if he pretended to be wiser than any man. Because he will not grant to them the monopoly of wisdom, they will have it thought that he claims it to himself, v. 7-9. As if he thought he had the advantage of all mankind,

**1.** In length of acquaintance with the world, which furnishes men with so much the more experience: “*Art thou the first man that was born*; and, consequently, senior to us, and better able to give the sense of antiquity and the judgment of the first and earliest, the wisest and purest, ages? Art thou prior to Adam?” So it may be read. “Did not he suffer for sin; and yet wilt not thou, who art so great a sufferer, own thyself a sinner? *Wast thou*

*made before the hills*, as Wisdom herself was? <sup><3083></sup>Proverbs 8:23, etc. Must God's counsels, which are as the great mountains (<sup><4806></sup>Psalm 36:6), and immovable as the everlasting hills, be subject to thy notions and bow to them? Dost thou know more of the world than any of us do? No, thou art but of yesterday even as we are," <sup><880></sup>Job 8:9. Or,

**2.** In intimacy of acquaintance with God (v. 8): "*Hast thou heard the secret of God?* Dost thou pretend to be of the cabinet-council of heaven, that thou canst give better reasons than others can for God's proceedings?" There are secret things of God, which belong not to us, and which therefore we must not pretend to account for. Those are daringly presumptuous who do. He also represents him,

**(1.)** As assuming to himself such knowledge as none else had: "*Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself*, as if none were wise besides?" Job had said (<sup><830></sup>Job 13:2), *What you know, the same do I know also*; and now they return upon him, according to the usage of eager disputants, who think they have a privilege to commend themselves: *What knowest thou that we know not?* How natural are such replies as these in the heat of argument! But how simple do they look afterwards, upon the review!

**(2.)** As opposing the stream of antiquity, a venerable name, under the shade of which all contending parties strive to shelter themselves: "*With us are the gray-headed and very aged men*, v. 10. We have the fathers on our side; all the ancient doctors of the church are of our opinion." A thing soon said, but not so soon proved; and, when proved, truth is not so soon discovered and proved by it as most people imagine. David preferred right scripture-knowledge before that of antiquity (<sup><3300></sup>Psalm 119:100): *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts*. Or perhaps one or more, if not all three, of these friends of Job, were older than he (<sup><830></sup>Job 32:6), and therefore they thought he was bound to acknowledge them to be in the right. This also serves contenders to make a noise with to very little purpose. If they are older than their adversaries, and can say they knew such a thing before their opponents were born, this will not serve to justify them in being arrogant and overbearing; for the oldest are not always the wisest, <sup><880></sup>Job 32:9.

**IV.** He charges him with a contempt of the counsels and comforts that were given him by his friends (v. 11): *Are the consolations of God small with thee?*

**1.** Eliphaz takes it ill that Job did not value the comforts which he and his friends administered to him more than it seems he did, and did not welcome every word they said as true and important. It is true they had said some very good things, but, in their application to Job, they were miserable comforters. Note, We are apt to think that great and considerable which we ourselves say, when others perhaps with good reason think it small and trifling. Paul found that those who *seemed to be somewhat, yet, in conference, added nothing to him,* <sup>4116</sup>Galatians 2:6.

**2.** He represents this as a slight put upon divine consolations in general, as if they were of small account with him, whereas really they were not. If he had not highly valued them, he could not have borne up as he did under his sufferings. Note,

**(1.)** The consolations of God are not in themselves small. Divine comforts are great things, that is, the comfort which is from God, especially the comfort which is in God.

**(2.)** The consolations of God not being small in themselves, it is very lamentable if they be small with us. It is a great affront to God, and an evidence of a degenerate depraved mind, to disesteem and undervalue spiritual delights and despise the pleasant land. “What!” (says Eliphaz) “*is there any secret thing with thee? Hast thou some cordial to support thyself with, that is a proprium, an arcanum, that nobody else can pretend to, or knows any thing of?*” Or, “Is there some secret sin harboured and indulged in thy bosom, which hinders the operation of divine comforts?” None disesteem divine comforts but those that secretly affect the world and the flesh.

**V.** He charges him with opposition to God himself and to religion (v. 12, 13): “*Why doth thy heart carry thee away into such indecent irreligious expressions?*” Note, *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust,* <sup>4114</sup>James 1:14. if we fly off from God and our duty, or fly out into anything amiss, it is our own heart that carries us away. *If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* There is a violence, an ungovernable impetus, in the turnings of the soul; the corrupt heart carries men away, as it were, by force, against their convictions. “What is it that thy eyes wink at? Why so careless and mindless of what is said to thee, hearing it as if thou wert half asleep? Why so scornful, disdainful what we say, as if it were below thee to take notice of it? What have we said that deserves to

be thus slighted — nay, *that thou turnest thy spirit against God?*” It was bad that his heart was carried away from God, but much worse that it was turned against God. But those that forsake God will soon break out in open enmity to him. But how did this appear? Why, “Thou lettest such words go out of thy mouth, reflecting on God, and his justice and goodness.” It is the character of the wicked that they *set their mouth against the heavens* (<sup><1719></sup>Psalm 73:9), which is a certain indication that the spirit is turned against God. He thought Job's spirit was soured against God, and so turned from what it had been, and exasperated at his dealings with him. Eliphaz wanted candour and charity, else he would not have put such a harsh construction upon the speeches of one that had such a settled reputation for piety and was now in temptation. This was, in effect, to give the cause on Satan's side, and to own that Job had done as Satan said he would, had *cursed God to his face*.

**VI.** He charges him with justifying himself to such a degree as even to deny his share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature (v. 14): *What is man, that he should be clean?* that is, that he should pretend to be so, or that any should expect to find him so. What is *he that is born of a woman*, a sinful woman, *that he should be righteous?* Note,

- 1.** Righteousness is cleanness; it makes us acceptable to God and easy to ourselves, <sup><1821></sup>Psalm 18:24.
- 2.** Man, in his fallen state, cannot pretend to be clean and righteous before God, either to acquit himself to God's justice or recommend himself to his favour.
- 3.** He is to be adjudged unclean and unrighteous because born of a woman, from whom he derives a corrupt nature, which is both his guilt and his pollution. With these plain truths Eliphaz thinks to convince Job, whereas he had just now said the same (<sup><1844></sup>Job 14:4): *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* But does it therefore follow that Job is a hypocrite, and a wicked man, which is all that he denied? By no means. Though man, as born of a woman, is not clean, yet, as born again of the Spirit, he is clean.
- 4.** Further to evince this he here shows,
  - (1.)** That the brightest creatures are imperfect and impure before God, v. 15. God places no confidence in saints and angels; he employs both, but

trusts neither with his service, without giving them fresh supplies of strength and wisdom for it, as knowing they are not sufficient of themselves, neither more nor better than his grace makes them. He takes no complacency in the heavens themselves. How pure soever they seem to us, in his eye they have many a speck and many a flaw: *The heavens are not clean in his sight*. If the stars (says Mr. Caryl) have no light in the sight of the sun, what light has the sun in the sight of God! See ~~2923~~ Isaiah 24:23.

**(2.)** That man is much more so (v. 16): *How much more abominable and filthy is man!* If saints are not to be trusted, much less sinners. If the heavens are not pure, which are as God made them, much less man, who is degenerated. Nay, he is abominable and filthy in the sight of God, and if ever he repent he is so in his own sight, and therefore he abhors himself. Sin is an odious thing, it makes men hateful. The body of sin is so, and is therefore called *a dead body*, a loathsome thing. Is it not a filthy thing, and enough to make any one sick, to see a man eating swine's food or drinking some nauseous and offensive stuff? Such is the filthiness of man that he *drinks iniquity* (that abominable thing which the Lord hates) as greedily, and with as much pleasure, as a man drinks water when he is thirsty. It is his constant drink; it is natural to sinners to commit iniquity. It gratifies, but does not satisfy, the appetites of the old man. It is like water to a man in a dropsy. The more men sin the more they would sin.

## ~~3857~~ JOB 15:17-35

### SECOND ADDRESS OF ELIPHAZ

Eliphaz, having reproved Job for his answers, here comes to maintain his own thesis, upon which he built his censure of Job. His opinion is that those who are wicked are certainly miserable, whence he would infer that those who are miserable are certainly wicked, and that therefore Job was so. Observe,

**I.** His solemn preface to this discourse, in which he bespeaks Job's attention, which he had little reason to expect, he having given so little heed to and put so little value upon what Job had said (v. 17): "*I will show thee that which is worth hearing, and not reason, as thou dost, with unprofitable talk.*" Thus apt are men, when they condemn the reasonings of others, to commend their own. He promises to teach him,



**1.** From his own experience and observation: “*That which I have myself seen, in divers instances, I will declare.*” It is of good use to take notice of the providences of God concerning the children of men, from which many a good lesson may be learned. What good observations we have made, and have found benefit by ourselves, we should be ready to communicate for the benefit of others; and we may speak boldly when we declare what we have seen.

**2.** From the wisdom of the ancients (v. 18): *Which wise men have told from their fathers.* Note, The wisdom and learning of the moderns are very much derived from those of the ancients. Good children will learn a good deal from their good parents; and what we have learned from our ancestors we must transmit to our posterity and not hide from the generations to come. See ~~CHR~~ Psalm 78:3-6. If the thread of the knowledge of many ages be cut off by the carelessness of one, and nothing be done to preserve it pure and entire, all that succeed fare the worse. The authorities Eliphaz vouched were authorities indeed, men of rank and figure (v. 19), *unto whom alone the earth was given*, and therefore you may suppose them favourites of Heaven and best capable of making observations concerning the affairs of this earth. The dictates of wisdom come with advantage from those who are in places of dignity and power, as Solomon; yet there is a wisdom *which none of the princes of this world knew*, ~~CHR~~ 1 Corinthians 2:7, 8.

**II.** The discourse itself. He here aims to show,

**1.** That those who are wise and good do ordinarily prosper in this world. This he only hints at (v. 19), that those of whose mind he was were such as had the earth given to them, and to them only; they enjoyed it entirely and peaceably, and no stranger passed among them, either to share with them or give disturbance to them. Job had said, *The earth is given into the hand of the wicked*, ~~CHR~~ Job 9:24. “No,” says Eliphaz, “it is given into the hands of the saints, and runs along with the faith committed unto them; and they are not robbed and plundered by strangers and enemies making inroads upon them, as thou art by the Sabeans and Chaldeans.” But because many of God’s people have remarkably prospered in this world, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it does not therefore follow that those who are crossed and impoverished, as Job, are not God’s people.

2. That wicked people, and particularly oppressors and tyrannizing rulers, are subject to continual terrors, live very uncomfortably, and perish very miserably. On this head he enlarges, showing that even those who impiously dare God's judgments yet cannot but dread them and will feel them at last. He speaks in the singular number — *the wicked man*, meaning (as some think) Nimrod; or perhaps Chedorlaomer, or some such mighty hunter before the Lord. I fear he meant Job himself, whom he expressly charges both with the tyranny and with the timorousness here described, <sup><K20></sup>Job 22:9, 10. Here he thinks the application easy, and that Job might, in this description, as in a glass, see his own face. Now,

(1.) Let us see how he describes the sinner who lives thus miserably. He does not begin with that, but brings it in as a reason of his doom, v. 25-28. It is no ordinary sinner, but one of the first rate, an *oppressor* (v. 20), a *blasphemer*, and a *persecutor*, one that *neither fears God nor regards man*.

[1.] He bids defiance to God, and to his authority and power, v. 25. Tell him of the divine law, and its obligations; he breaks those bonds asunder, and will not have, no, not him that made him, to restrain him or rule over him. Tell him of the divine wrath, and its terrors; he bids the Almighty do his worst, he will have his will, he will have his way, in spite of him, and will not be controlled by law, or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. *He stretches out his hand against God*, in defiance of him and of the power of his wrath. God is indeed out of his reach, but he stretches out his hand against him, to show that, if it were in his power, he would ungod him. This applies to the audacious impiety of some sinners who are really *haters of God* (<sup><R10></sup>Romans 1:30), and whose carnal mind is not only an enemy to him, but enmity itself, <sup><R17></sup>Romans 8:7. But, alas! the sinner's malice is as impotent as it is impudent; what can he do? *He strengthens himself* (*he would be valiant*, so some read it) *against the Almighty*. He thinks with his exorbitant despotic power to *change times and laws* (<sup><205></sup>Daniel 7:25), and, in spite of Providence, to carry the day for rapine and wrong, clear of the check of conscience. Note, It is the prodigious madness of presumptuous sinners that they enter the lists with Omnipotence. *Woe unto him that strives with his Maker*. That is generally taken for a further description of the sinner's daring presumption (v. 26): *He runs upon him*, upon God himself, in a direct opposition to him, to his precepts and providences, *even upon his neck*, as a desperate combatant, when he finds himself an unequal match for his adversary, flies in his face,

though, at the same time, he falls on his sword's point, or the sharp spike of his buckler. Sinners, in general, run from God; but the presumptuous sinner, who sins with a high hand, runs upon him, fights against him, and bids defiance to him; and it is easy to foretel what will be the issue.

[2.] He wraps himself up in security and sensuality (v. 27): *He covers his face with his fatness*. This signifies both the pampering of his flesh with daily delicious fare and the hardening of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. Note, The gratifying of the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting that to the full, often turns to the damage of the soul and its interests. Why is God forgotten and slighted, but because the belly is made a god of and happiness placed in the delights of sense? Those that fill themselves with wine and strong drink abandon all that is serious and flatter themselves with hopes that *tomorrow shall be as this day*, <sup><286D></sup> Isaiah 56:12. *Woe to those that are thus at ease in Zion*, <sup><306E></sup> Amos 6:1, 3, 4; <sup><029></sup> Luke 12:19. The fat that covers his face makes him look bold and haughty, and that which covers his flanks makes him lie easy and soft, and feel little; but this will prove poor shelter against the darts of God's wrath.

[3.] He enriches himself with the spoils of all about him, v. 28. He dwells in cities which he himself has made desolate by expelling the inhabitants out of them, that he might be placed alone in them, <sup><288B></sup> Isaiah 5:8 Proud and cruel men take a strange pleasure in ruins, when they are of their own making, in *destroying cities* (<sup><3006></sup> Psalm 9:6) and triumphing in the destruction, since they cannot make them their own but by making them *ready to become heaps*, and frightening the inhabitants out of them. Note, Those that aim to engross the world to themselves, and grasp at all, lose the comfort of all, and make themselves miserable in the midst of all. How does this tyrant gain his point, and make himself master of cities that have all the marks of antiquity upon them? We are told (v. 35) that he does it by malice and falsehood, the two chief ingredients of *his* wickedness who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, *They conceive mischief*, and then they effect it by *preparing deceit*, pretending to protect those whom they design to subdue, and making leagues of peace the more effectually to carry on the operations of war. From such wicked men God deliver all good men.

(2.) Let us see now what is the miserable condition of this wicked man, both in spiritual and temporal judgments.

[1.] His inward peace is continually disturbed. He seems to those about him to be easy, and they therefore envy him and wish themselves in his condition; but he who knows what is in men tells us that a wicked man has so little comfort and satisfaction in his own breast that he is rather to be pitied than envied. *First*, His own conscience accuses him, and with the pangs and throes of that *he travaileth in pain all his days*, v. 20. He is continually uneasy at the thought of the cruelties he as been guilty of and the blood in which he has imbrued his hands. His sins stare him in the face at every turn. *Diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos* — *Conscious guilt astonishes and confounds*. *Secondly*, He is vexed at the uncertainty of the continuance of his wealth and power: *The number of years is hidden to the oppressor*. He knows, whatever he pretends, that they will not last always, and has reason to fear that they will not last long and this he frets at. *Thirdly*, He is under a *certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation* (<sup>3807</sup>Hebrews 10:27), which puts him into, and keeps him in, a continual terror and consternation, so that he dwells with Cain in the land of Nod, or *commotion* (<sup>0046</sup>Genesis 4:16), and is made like, *Pashur, Magor-missabib* — *a terror round about*, <sup>2808</sup>Jeremiah 20:3, 4. *A dreadful sound is in his ears*, v. 21. He knows that both heaven and earth are incensed against him, that God is angry with him and that all the world hates him; he has done nothing to make his peace with either, and therefore he thinks that every one who *meets him will slay him*, <sup>0044</sup>Genesis 4:14. Or he is like a man absconding for debt, who thinks every man a bailiff. Fear came in, at first, with sin (<sup>0030</sup>Genesis 3:10) and still attends it. Even in prosperity he is apprehensive that the destroyer will come upon him, either some destroying angel sent of God to avenge his quarrel or some of his injured subjects who will be their own avengers. Those who are the *terror of the mighty in the land of the living usually go down slain to the pit* (<sup>3525</sup>Ezekiel 32:25), the expectation of which makes them a terror to themselves. This is further set forth (v. 22): *He is*, in his own apprehension, *waited for of the sword*; for he knows that *he who killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword*, <sup>6630</sup>Revelation 13:10. A guilty conscience represents to the sinner a *flaming sword turning every way* (<sup>0024</sup>Genesis 3:24) and himself inevitably running on it. Again (v. 23): *He knows that the day of darkness* (or the *night of darkness* rather) *is ready at his hand*, that it is appointed to him and cannot be put by, that it is hastening on apace and cannot be put off. This day of darkness is something beyond death; it is that *day of the Lord* which to all wicked people will be darkness and not light and in which they will be doomed to

utter, endless, darkness. Note, Some wicked people, though they seem secure, have already received the sentence of death, eternal death, within themselves, and plainly see hell gaping for them. No marvel that it follows (v. 24), *Trouble and anguish* (that inward tribulation and anguish of soul spoken of <sup><418></sup>Romans 2:8, 9, which are the effect of God's *indignation and wrath* fastening upon the conscience) *shall make him afraid* of worse to come. What is the hell before him if this be the hell within him? And though he would fain shake off his fears, drink them away, and jest them away, it will not do; *they shall prevail against him*, and overpower him, *as a king ready to the battle*, with forces too strong to be resisted. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience. *Fourthly*, If at any time he be in trouble, he despairs of getting out (v. 22): *He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness*, but he gives himself up for gone and lost in an endless night. Good men expect *light at evening time, light out of darkness*; but what reason have those to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble who would not return from the darkness of sin, but *went on in it*? <sup><435></sup>Psalm 82:5. It is the misery of damned sinners that they know they shall never return out of that utter darkness, nor pass the gulf there fixed. *Fifthly*, He perplexes himself with continual care, especially if Providence ever so little frown upon him, v. 23. Such a dread he has of poverty, and such a waste does he discern upon his estate, that he is already, in his own imagination, *wandering abroad for bread*, going a begging for a meal's meat, and *saying, Where is it?* The rich man, in his abundance, cried out, *What shall I do?* <sup><427></sup>Luke 12:17. Perhaps he pretends fear of wanting, as an excuse of his covetous practices; and justly may he be brought to this extremity at last. We read of those who *were full*, but have *hired out themselves for bread* (<sup><415></sup>1 Samuel 2:5), which this sinner will not do. He cannot dig; he is too fat (v. 27): but to beg he may well be ashamed. See <sup><490></sup>Psalm 109:10. David never saw the righteous so far forsaken as to beg their bread; for, verily, they shall be fed by the charitable unasked, <sup><475></sup>Psalm 37:3, 25. But the wicked want it, and cannot expect it should be readily given them. How should those find mercy who never showed mercy?

[2.] His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence and all his comfort will come to an end with it. How can he prosper when God runs upon him? so some understand that, v. 26. Whom God runs *upon* he will certainly run *down*; for when he judges he will overcome. See how the judgments of God cross this worldly wicked man

in all his cares, desires, and projects, and so complete his misery. *First*, He is in care to get, but *he shall not be rich*, v. 29. His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich. He is not rich that has not enough, and he has not enough that does not think he has. It is contentment only that is great gain. Providence remarkably keeps some from being rich, defeating their enterprises, breaking their measures, and keeping them always behind-hand. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich: it goes as it comes; it is got by one sin and spent upon another. *Secondly*, He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain: *His substance shall not continue*; it will dwindle and come to nothing. God blasts it, and what *came up in a night perishes in a night*. *Wealth gotten by vanity will certainly be diminished*. Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of those estates which have been raised by oppression; but, where this is not the case, that which is left goes with a curse to those who succeed. *De male quaesitis vix gaudet tertius haeres — Ill-gotten property will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation*. He purchases estates *to him and his heirs for ever*; but to what purpose? *He shall not prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth*; neither the credit nor the comfort of his riches shall be prolonged; and, when those are gone, where is the perfection of them? How indeed can we expect the perfection of any thing to be prolonged upon the earth, where every thing is transitory, and we soon see the end of all perfection? *Thirdly*, He is in care to leave what he has got and kept to his children after him. But in this he is crossed; the branches of his family shall perish, in whom he hoped to live and flourish and to have the reputation of making them all great men. *They shall not be green*, v. 32. *The flame shall dry them up*, v. 30. he shall shake them off as blossoms that never knit, or as the *unripe grape*, v. 33. They shall die in the beginning of their days and never come to maturity. Many a man's family is ruined by his iniquity. *Fourthly*, He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed.

**1.** He may perhaps be taken from it (v. 30): *By the breath of God's mouth shall he go away*, and leave his wealth to others; that is, by God's wrath, which, *like a stream of brimstone*, kindles the fire that devours him (<sup>2383</sup>Isaiah 30:33), or by his word; he speaks, and it is done immediately. *This night thy soul shall be required of thee*; and so *the wicked is driven away in his wickedness*, the worldling in his worldliness.

2. It may perhaps be taken from him, and fly away like an eagle towards heaven: *It shall be accomplished* (or cut off) *before his time* (v. 32); that is, he shall survive his prosperity, and see himself stripped of it. *Fifthly*, He is in care, when he is in trouble, how to get out of it (not how to get good by it); but in this also he is crossed (v. 30): *He shall not depart out of darkness*. When he begins to fall, like Haman, all men say, “Down with him.” It was said of him (v. 22), *He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness*. He frightened himself with the perpetuity of his calamity, and God also shall *choose his delusions* and *bring his fears upon him* (<sup>2404</sup>Isaiah 66:4), as he did upon Israel, <sup>0443</sup>Numbers 14:28. God says *Amen* to his distrust and despair. *Sixthly*, He is in care to secure his partners, and hopes to secure himself by his partnership with them; but that is in vain too, v. 34, 35. *The congregation* of them, the whole confederacy, they and all their tabernacles, *shall be desolate* and consumed with fire. Hypocrisy and bribery are here charged upon them; that is, deceitful dealing both with God and man — God affronted under colour of religion, man wronged under colour of justice. It is impossible that these should end well. *Though hand join in hand* for the support of these perfidious practices, *yet shall not the wicked go unpunished*.

(3.) The use and application of all this. Will the prosperity of presumptuous sinners end thus miserably? Then (v. 31) *let not him that is deceived trust in vanity*. Let the mischiefs which befall others be our warnings, and let not us rest on that broken reed which always failed those who leaned on it.

[1.] Those who trust to their sinful ways of getting wealth *trust in vanity*, and *vanity will be their recompence*, for they shall not get what they expected. Their arts will deceive them and perhaps ruin them in this world.

[2.] Those who trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, *trust in vanity*; for it will yield them no satisfaction. The guilt that cleaves to it will ruin the joy of it. They sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind, and will own at length, with the utmost confusion, that *a deceived heart turned them aside*, and that they cheated themselves with *a lie in their right hand*.