

CHAPTER 1

Those who read David's psalms, especially those towards the latter end, would be tempted to think that religion is all rapture and consists in nothing but the ecstasies and transports of devotion; and doubtless there is a time for them, and if there be a heaven upon earth it is in them: but, while we are on earth, we cannot be wholly taken up with them; we have a life to live in the flesh, must have a conversation in the world, and into that we must now be taught to carry our religion, which is a rational thing, and very serviceable to the government of human life, and tends as much to make us discreet as to make us devout, to make the face shine before men, in a prudent, honest, useful conversation, as to make the heart burn towards God in holy and pious affections. In this chapter we have,

- I.** The title of the book, showing the general scope and design of it (v. 1-6).
- II.** The first principle of it recommended to our serious consideration (v. 7-9).
- III.** A necessary caution against bad company (v. 10-19).
- IV.** A faithful and lively representation of wisdom's reasonings with the children of men, and the certain ruin of those who turn a deaf ear to those reasonings (v. 20-33).

~~III~~ PROVERBS 1:1-6

THE DESIGN OF THE PROVERBS

We have here an introduction to this book, which some think was prefixed by the collector and publisher, as Ezra; but it is rather supposed to have been penned by Solomon himself, who, in the beginning of his book, proposes his end in writing it, that he might keep to his business, and closely pursue that end. We are here told,

- I.** Who wrote these wise sayings, v. 1. They are *the proverbs of Solomon*.

1. His name signifies *peaceable*, and the character both of his spirit and of his reign answered to it; both were peaceable. David, whose life was full of troubles, wrote a book of devotion; for *is any afflicted? let him pray*. Solomon, who lived quietly, wrote a book of instruction; for when the *churches had rest they were edified*. In times of peace we should learn ourselves, and teach others, that which in troublous times both they and we must practise.

2. He was *the son of David*; it was his honour to stand related to that good man, and he reckoned it so with good reason, for he fared the better for it, ^{<1112>}1 Kings 11:12. He had been blessed with a good education, and many a good prayer had been put up for him (^{<971>}Psalms 72:1), the effect of both which appeared in his wisdom and usefulness. The *generation of the upright* are sometimes thus blessed, that they are made blessings, eminent blessings, in their day. Christ is often called *the Son of David*, and Solomon was a type of him in this, as in other things, that he *opened his mouth in parables or proverbs*.

3. He was *king of Israel* — a king, and yet it was no disparagement to him to be an instructor of the ignorant, and a teacher of babes — king of Israel, that people among whom God was known and his name was great; among them he learned wisdom, and to them he communicated it. All the earth sought to Solomon *to hear his wisdom*, which excelled all men's (^{<103>}1 Kings 4:30; 10:24); it was an honour to Israel that their king was such a dictator, such an oracle. Solomon was famous for apophthegms; every word he said had weight in it, and something that was surprising and edifying. His servants who attended him, and heard his wisdom, had, among them, collected 3000 proverbs of his which they wrote in their day-books; but these were of his own writing, and do not amount to nearly a thousand. In these he was divinely inspired. Some think that out of those other proverbs of his, which were not so inspired, the apocryphal books of *Ecclesiasticus* and the *Wisdom of Solomon* were compiled, in which are many excellent sayings, and of great use; but, take altogether, they are far short of this book. The Roman emperors had each of them his symbol or motto, as many now have with their coat of arms. But Solomon had many weighty sayings, not as theirs, borrowed from others, but all the product of that extraordinary wisdom which God had endued him with.

II. For what end they were written (v. 2-4), not to gain a reputation to the author, or strengthen his interest among his subjects, but for the use and

benefit of all that in every age and place will govern themselves by these dictates and study them closely. This book will help us,

1. To form right notions of things, and to possess our minds with clear and distinct ideas of them, that we may *know wisdom and instruction*, that wisdom which is got by instruction, by divine revelation, may know both how to speak and act wisely ourselves and to give instruction to others.

2. To distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil — *to perceive the words of understanding*, to apprehend them, to judge of them, to guard against mistakes, and to accommodate what we are taught to ourselves and our own use, that we may *discern things that differ* and not be imposed upon, and may *approve things that are excellent* and not lose the benefit of them, as the apostle prays, <sup>³⁰⁰⁰Philippians 1:10.

3. To order our conversation aright in every things, v. 3. This book will give, that we may *receive, the instruction of wisdom*, that knowledge which will guide our practice in *justice, judgment, and equity* (v. 3), which will dispose us to render to all their due, to God the things that are God's, in all the exercises of religion, and to all men what is due to them, according to the obligations which by relation, office, contract, or upon any other account, we lie under to them. Note, Those are truly wise, and none but those, who are universally conscientious; and the design of the scripture is to teach us that wisdom, *justice* in the duties of the first table, *judgment* in those of the second table, *and equity* (that is sincerity) in both; so some distinguish them.

III. For whose use they were written, v. 4. They are of use to all, but are designed especially,

1. For *the simple, to give subtlety* to them. The instructions here given are plain and easy, and level to the meanest capacity, *the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*; and those are likely to receive benefit by them who are sensible of their own ignorance and their need to be taught, and are therefore desirous to receive instruction; and those who receive these instructions in their light and power, though they be simple, will hereby be made subtle, graciously crafty to know the sin they should avoid and the duty they should do, and to escape the tempter's wiles. He that is *harmless as the dove* by observing Solomon's rules may become *wise as the serpent*; and he that has been sinfully foolish when he begins to govern himself by the word of God becomes graciously wise.

2. For young people, to give them *knowledge and discretion*. Youth is the learning age, catches at instructions, receives impressions, and retains what is then received; it is therefore of great consequence that the mind be then seasoned well, nor can it receive a better tincture than from Solomon's proverbs. Youth is rash, and heady, and inconsiderate; *man is born like the wild ass's colt*, and therefore needs to be broken by the restraints and managed by the rules we find here. And, if young people will but take heed to their ways according to Solomon's proverbs, they will soon gain the knowledge and discretion of the ancients. Solomon had an eye to posterity in writing this book, hoping by it to season the minds of the rising generation with the generous principles of wisdom and virtue.

IV. What good use may be made of them, v. 5, 6. Those who are young and simple may by them be made wise, and are not excluded from Solomon's school, as they were from Plato's. But is it only for such? No; here is not only milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men. This book will not only make the foolish and bad wise and good, but the wise and good wiser and better; and though the simple and the young man may perhaps slight those instructions, and not be the better for them, yet the *wise man will hear*. Wisdom will be justified by her own children, though not by the children sitting in the market-place. Note, Even wise men must hear, and not think themselves too wise to learn. *A wise man* is sensible of his own defects (*Plurima ignoro, sed ignorantiam meam non ignoro — I am ignorant of many things, but not of my own ignorance*), and therefore is still pressing forward, that he may *increase in learning*, may know more and know it better, more clearly and distinctly, and may know better how to make use of it. As long as we live we should strive to increase in all useful learning. It was a saying of one of the greatest of the rabbim, *Qui non auget scientiam, amittit de ea — If our stock of knowledge by not increasing, it is wasting*; and those that would increase in learning must study the scriptures; these *perfect the man of God*. A wise man, by increasing in learning, is not only profitable to himself, but to others also,

1. As a counsellor. *A man of understanding* in these precepts of wisdom, by comparing them with one another and with his own observations, *shall* by degrees *attain unto wise counsels*; he stands fair for preferment, and will be consulted as an oracle, and entrusted with the management of public affairs; he shall come to *sit at the helm*, so the word signifies. Note, Industry is the way to honour; and those whom God has blessed with wisdom must study to do good with it, according as their sphere is. It is

more dignity indeed to be counsellor to the prince, but it is more charity to be counsellor to the poor, as Job was with his wisdom. ~~1395~~ Job 29:15, *I was eyes to the blind.*

2. As an interpreter (v. 6) — *to understand a proverb.* Solomon was himself famous for expounding riddles and resolving hard questions, which was of old the celebrated entertainment of the eastern princes, witness the solutions he gave to the enquiries with which the queen of Sheba thought to puzzle him. Now here he undertakes to furnish his readers with that talent, as far as would be serviceable to the best purposes. “They shall *understand a proverb, even the interpretation,* without which the proverb is a nut uncracked; when they hear a wise saying, though it be figurative, they shall take the sense of it, and know how to make use of it.” *The words of the wise are sometimes dark sayings.* In St. Paul's epistles there is that which is *hard to be understood;* but to those who, being well-versed in the scriptures, know how to *compare spiritual things with spiritual,* they will be easy and safe; so that, if you ask them, *Have you understood all these things?* they may answer, *Yea, Lord.* Note, It is a credit to religion when men of honesty are men of sense; all good people therefore should aim to be intelligent, and *run to and fro,* take pains in the use of means, that their *knowledge may be increased.*

~~1000~~ PROVERBS 1:7-9

PARENTAL ADMONITIONS

Solomon, having undertaken to *teach a young man knowledge and discretion,* here lays down two general rules to be observed in order thereunto, and those are, to fear God and honour his parents, which two fundamental laws of morality Pythagoras begins his golden verses with, but the former of them in a wretchedly corrupted state. *Primum, deos immortales cole, parentesque honora* — *First worship the immortal gods, and honour your parents.* To make young people such as they should be,

I. Let them have regard to God as their supreme.

1. He lays down this truth, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge* (v. 7); it is *the principal part of knowledge* (so the margin); it is the head of knowledge; that is,

(1.) Of all things that are to be known this is most evident, that *God is to be feared*, to be revered, served, and worshipped; this is so the beginning of knowledge that those know nothing who do not know this.

(2.) In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of his doctrine*, ~~<AVT>~~John 7:17.

(3.) As all our knowledge must take rise from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its perfection and centre. Those know enough who know how to fear God, who are careful in every thing to please him and fearful of offending him in any thing; this is the Alpha and Omega of knowledge.

2. To confirm this truth, that an eye to God must both direct and quicken all our pursuits of knowledge, he *observes*, *Fools* (atheists, who have no regard to God) *despise wisdom and instruction*; having no dread at all of God's wrath, nor any desire of his favour, they will not give you thanks for telling them what they may do to escape his wrath and obtain his favour. Those who say to the Almighty, *Depart from us*, who are so far from fearing him that they set him at defiance, can excite no surprise if they desire not the knowledge of his ways, but despise that instruction. Note, Those are fools who do not fear God and value the scriptures; and though they may pretend to be admirers of wit they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom.

II. Let them have regard to their parents as their superiors (v. 8, 9): *My son, hear the instruction of thy father*. He means, not only that he would have his own children to be observant of him, and of what he said to them, nor only that he would have his pupils, and those who came to him to be taught, to look upon him as their father and attend to his precepts with the disposition of children, but that he would have all children to be dutiful and respectful to their parents, and to conform to the virtuous and religious education which they give them, according to the law of the fifth commandment.

1. He takes it for granted that parents will, with all the wisdom they have, instruct their children, and, with all the authority they have, give law to them for their good. They are reasonable creatures, and therefore we must not give them law without instruction; we must draw them with the cords of a man, and when we tell them what they must do we must tell them why. But they are corrupt and wilful, and therefore with the instruction there is need of a law. Abraham will not only catechize, but command, his household. Both the father and the mother must do all they can for the good education of their children, and all little enough.

2. He charges children both to receive and to retain the good lessons and laws their parents give them.

(1.) To receive them with readiness: “*Hear the instruction of thy father; hear it and heed it; hear it and bid it welcome, and be thankful for it, and subscribe to it.*”

(2.) To retain them with resolution: “*Forsake not their law; think not that when thou art grown up, and no longer under tutors and governors, thou mayest live at large; no, the law of thy mother was according to the law of thy God, and therefore it must never be forsaken; thou wast trained up in the way in which thou shouldst go, and therefore, when thou art old, thou must not depart from it.*” Some observe that whereas the Gentile ethics, and the laws of the Persians and Romans, provided only that children should pay respect to their father, the divine law secures the honour of the mother also.

3. He recommends this as that which is very graceful and will put an honour upon us: “The instructions and laws of thy parents, carefully observed and lived up to, *shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head* (v. 9), such an ornament as is, in the sight of God, of great price, and shall make thee look as great as those that wear gold *chains about their necks.*” Let divine truths and commands be to us a coronet, or a collar of SS, which are badges of first-rate honours; let us value them, and be ambitious of them, and then they shall be so to us. Those are truly valuable, and shall be valued, who value themselves more by their virtue and piety than by their worldly wealth and dignity.

~~300~~ PROVERBS 1:10-19

PARENTAL ADMONITIONS

Here Solomon gives another general rule to young people, in order to their finding out, and keeping in, the paths of wisdom, and that is to take heed of the snare of bad company. David's psalms begin with this caution, and so do Solomon's proverbs; for nothing is more destructive, both to a lively devotion and to a regular conversation (v. 10): "*My son, whom I love, and have a tender concern for, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*" This is good advice for parents to give their children when they send them abroad into the world; it is the same that St. Peter gave to his new converts, (~~420~~ Acts 2:40), *Save yourselves from this untoward generation.* Observe, 1. How industrious wicked people are to seduce others into the paths of the destroyer: they will entice. Sinners love company in sin; the angels that fell were tempters almost as soon as they were sinners. They do not threaten or argue, but entice with flattery and fair speech; with a bait they draw the unwary young man to the hook. But they mistake if they think that by bringing others to partake with them in their guilt, and to be bound, as it were, in the bond with them, they shall have the less to pay themselves; for they will have so much the more to answer for.

2. How cautious young people should be that they be not seduced by them: "*Consent thou not; and then, though they entice thee, they cannot force thee. Do not say as they say, nor do as they do or would have thee to do; have no fellowship with them.*" To enforce this caution,

I. He represents the fallacious reasonings which sinners use in their enticements, and the arts of wheedling which they have for the beguiling of unstable souls. He specifies highwaymen, who do what they can to draw others into their gang, v. 11-14. See here what they would have the young man to do: "*Come with us* (v. 11); let us have thy company." At first they pretend to ask no more; but the courtship rises higher (v. 14): "*Cast in thy lot among us; come in partner with us, join thy force to ours, and let us resolve to live and die together: thou shalt fare as we fare; and let us all have one purse,* that what we get together we may spend merrily together," for that is it they aim it [at?]. Two unreasonable insatiable lusts they propose to themselves the gratification of, and therewith entice their pray into the snare: —

1. Their cruelty. They thirst after blood, and hate those that are innocent and never gave them any provocation, because by their honesty and industry they shame and condemn them: “*Let us therefore lay wait for their blood, and lurk privily for them; they are conscious to themselves of no crime and consequently apprehensive of no danger, but travel unarmed; therefore we shall make the more easy prey of them. And, O how sweet it will be to swallow them up alive!*” v. 12. These bloody men would do this as greedily as the hungry lion devours the lamb. If it be objected, “The remains of the murdered will betray the murderers;” they answer, “No danger of that; we will swallow them whole as those that are buried.” Who could imagine that human nature should degenerate so far that it should ever be a pleasure to one man to destroy another!

2. Their covetousness. They hope to get a good booty by it (v. 13): “We shall *find all precious substance* by following this trade. What though we venture our necks by it? we shall *fill our houses with spoil.*” See here,

(1.) The idea they have of worldly wealth. They call it *precious substance*; whereas it is neither substance nor precious; it is a shadow; it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbery, ³⁹²⁰Psalm 62:10. It is as that which is not, which will give a man no solid satisfaction. It is cheap, it is common, yet, in their account, it is precious, and therefore they will hazard their lives, and perhaps their souls, in pursuit of it. It is the ruining mistake of thousands that they over-value the wealth of this world and look on it as *precious substance*.

(2.) The abundance of it which they promise themselves: We shall *fill our houses with it*. Those who trade with sin promise themselves mighty bargains, and that it will turn to a vast account (All this will I give thee, says the tempter); but they only *dream that they eat*; the housefuls dwindle into scarcely a handful, like the grass on the house-tops.

II. He shows the perniciousness of these ways, as a reason why we should dread them (v. 15): “*My son, walk not thou in the way with them; do not associate with them; get, and keep, as far off from them as thou canst; refrain thy foot from their path; do not take example by them, not do as they do.*” Such is the corruption of our nature that our foot is very prone to step into the path of sin, so that we must use necessary violence upon ourselves to refrain our foot from it, and check ourselves if at any time we take the least step towards it. Consider,

1. How pernicious their way is in its own nature (v. 16): *Their feet run to evil*, to that which is displeasing to God and hurtful to mankind, for they *make haste to shed blood*. Note, The way of sin is down-hill; men not only cannot stop themselves, but, the longer they continue in it, the faster they run, and make haste in it, as if they were afraid they should not do mischief enough and were resolved to lose no time. They said they would proceed leisurely (Let us *lay wait for blood*, v. 11), but thou wilt find they are all in haste, so much has Satan *filled their hearts*.

2. How pernicious the consequences of it will be. They are plainly told that this wicked way will certainly end in their own destruction, and yet they persist in it. Herein,

(1.) They are like the silly bird, that sees the net spread to take her, and yet it is in vain; she is decoyed into it by the bait, and will not take the warning which her own eyes gave her, v. 17. But we think ourselves *of more value than many sparrows*, and therefore should have more wit, and act with more caution. God has *made us wiser than the fowls of heaven* (~~RSB~~ Job 35:11), and shall we then be as stupid as they?

(2.) They are worse than the birds, and have not the sense which we sometimes perceive them to have; for the fowler knows it is in vain to lay his snare *in the sight of the bird*, and therefore he has arts to conceal it. But the sinner sees ruin at the end of his way; the murderer, the thief, see the jail and the gallows before them, nay, they may see hell before them; their watchmen tell them they shall surely die, but it is to no purpose; they rush into sin, and rush on in it, like the horse into the battle. For really the stone they roll will turn upon themselves, v. 18, 19. They lay wait, and lurk privily, for the blood and lives of others, but it will prove, contrary to their intention, to be for *their own blood, their own lives*; they will come, at length, to a shameful end; and, if they escape the sword of the magistrate, yet there is a divine Nemesis that pursues them. *Vengeance suffers them not to live*. Their greediness of gain hurries them upon those practices which will not suffer them to live out half their days, but will cut off the number of their months in the midst. They have little reason to be proud of their property in that which *takes away the life of the owners* and then passes to other masters; and what is a man profited, though he gain the world, if he lose his life? For then he can enjoy the world no longer; much less if he lose his soul, and that be drowned in destruction and perdition, as multitudes are by the love of money.

Now, though Solomon specifies only the temptation to rob on the highway, yet he intends hereby to warn us against all other evils which sinners entice men to. Such are the ways of the drunkards and unclean; they are indulging themselves in those pleasures which tend to their ruin both here and for ever; and therefore consent not to them.

~~200~~ PROVERBS 1:20-33

WISDOM'S EXHORTATIONS

Solomon, having shown how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here shows how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of God, which we shall for ever rue the neglect of. Observe,

I. By whom God calls to us — by *wisdom*. It is *wisdom* that *crieth without*. The word is plural — *wisdoms*, for, as there is infinite wisdom in God, so there is the *manifold wisdom of God*, ~~400~~ Ephesians 3:10. God speaks to the children of men by all the kinds of wisdom, and, as in every will, so in every word, of God there is a counsel.

1. Human understanding is wisdom, the light and law of nature, the powers and faculties of reason, and the office of conscience, ~~430~~ Job 38:36. By these God speaks to the children of men, and reasons with them. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*; and, wherever men go, they may hear a voice behind them, saying, *This is the way*; and the voice of conscience is the voice of God, and not always a still small voice, but sometimes it cries.

2. Civil government is wisdom; it is God's ordinance; magistrates are his vicegerents [viceregens?]. God by David had *said to the fools, Deal not foolishly*, ~~450~~ Psalm 75:4. *In the opening of the gates*, and in the *places of concourse*, where courts were kept, the judges, the wisdom of the nation, called to wicked people, in God's name, to repent and reform.

3. Divine revelation is wisdom; all its dictates, all its laws, are wise as wisdom itself. God does, by the written word, by the law of Moses, which sets before us the blessing and the curse, by the priests' lips which keep knowledge, by his servants the prophets, and all the ministers of this word, declare his mind to sinners, and give them warning as plainly as that

which is proclaimed in the streets or courts of judicature by the criers. God, in his word, not only opens the case, but argues it with the children of men. *Come, now, and let us reason together,* ^{<2018>}Isaiah 1:18.

4. Christ himself is Wisdom, is Wisdoms, for *in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, and he is the centre of all divine revelation, not only the *essential Wisdom*, but the *eternal Word*, by whom God speaks to us and to whom he has *committed all judgment*; he it is therefore who here both pleads with sinners and passes sentence on them. He calls himself *Wisdom*, ^{<4175>}Luke 7:35.

II. How he calls to us, and in what manner.

1. Very publicly, that whosoever hath ears to hear may hear, since all are welcome to take the benefit of what is said and all are concerned to heed it. The rules of wisdom are published *without in the streets*, not in the schools only, or in the palaces of princes, but *in the chief places of concourse*, among the common people that pass and repass *in the opening of the gates and in the city*. It is comfortable casting the net of the gospel where there is a multitude of fish, in hopes that then some will be enclosed. This was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, who taught openly in the temple, in crowds of people, and *in secret said nothing* (^{<4880>}John 18:20), and charged his ministers to *proclaim his gospel on the housetop*, ^{<4007>}Matthew 10:27. God says (^{<2359>}Isaiah 45:19), *I have not spoken in secret*. There is *no speech or language where Wisdom's voice is not heard*. Truth seeks not corners, nor is virtue ashamed of itself.

2. Very pathetically; she *cries*, and again she *cries*, as one in earnest. *Jesus stood and cried*. She *utters her voice*, she *utters her words* with all possible clearness and affection. God is desirous to be heard and heeded.

III. What the call of God and Christ is.

1. He reproveth sinners for their folly and their obstinately persisting in it, v. 22. Observe,

(1.) Who they are that Wisdom here reproveth and expostulates with. In general, they are such as are *simple*, and therefore might justly be despised, such as *love simplicity*, and therefore might justly be despaired of; but we must use the means even with those that we have but little hopes of, because we know not what divine grace may do. Three sorts of persons are here called to: —

[1.] *Simple ones that love simplicity.* Sin is simplicity, and sinners are simple ones; they do foolishly, very foolishly; and the condition of those is very bad who love simplicity, are fond of their simple notions of good and evil, their simple prejudices against the ways of God, and are in their element when they are doing a simple thing, sporting themselves in their own deceivings and flattering themselves in their wickedness.

[2.] *Scorners that delight in scorning* — proud people that take a pleasure in hectoring all about them, jovial people that banter all mankind, and make a jest of every thing that comes in their way. But scoffers at religion are especially meant, the worst of sinners, that scorn to submit to the truths and laws of Christ, and to the reproofs and admonitions of his word, and take a pride in running down every thing that is sacred and serious.

[3.] *Fools that hate knowledge.* None but fools hate knowledge. Those only are enemies to religion that do not understand it aright. And those are the worst of fools that hate to be instructed and reformed, and have a rooted antipathy to serious godliness.

(2.) How the reproof is expressed: “*How long will you do so?*” This implies that the God of heaven desires the conversion and reformation of sinners and not their ruin, that he is much displeased with their obstinacy and dilatoriness, that he waits to be gracious, and is willing to reason the case with them.

2. He invites them to repent and become wise, v. 23. And here,

(1.) The precept is plain: *Turn you at my reproof.* We do not make a right use of the reproofs that are given us for that which is evil if we do not turn from it to that which is good; for for this end the reproof was given. Turn, that is, return to your right mind, turn to God, turn to your duty, turn and live.

(2.) The promises are very encouraging. Those that love simplicity find themselves under a moral impotency to change their own mind and way; they cannot turn by any power of their own. To this God answers, “*Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you;* set yourselves to do what you can, and the grace of God shall set in with you, and work in you both to will and to do that good which, without that grace, you could not do.” Help thyself, and God will help thee; *stretch forth thy withered hand,* and Christ will strengthen and heal it.

[1.] The author of this grace is the Spirit, and that is promised: *I will pour out my Spirit unto you*, as oil, as water; you shall have the Spirit in abundance, *rivers of living water*, ~~403~~ John 7:38. Our heavenly Father *will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him*.

[2.] The means of this grace is the word, which, if we take it aright, will turn us; it is therefore promised, “*I will make known my words unto you*, not only speak them to you, but make them known, give you to understand them.” Note, Special grace is necessary to a sincere conversion. But that grace shall never be denied to any that honestly seek it and submit to it.

3. He reads the doom of those that continue obstinate against all these means and methods of grace. It is large and very terrible, v. 24-32. Wisdom, having called sinners to return, pauses awhile, to see what effect the call has, *hearkens and hears; but they speak not aright* (~~208~~ Jeremiah 8:6), and therefore she goes on to tell them what will be in the end hereof.

(1.) The crime is recited and it is highly provoking. See what it is for which judgment will be given against impenitent sinners in the great day, and you will say they deserve it, and the Lord is righteous in it. It is, in short, rejecting Christ and the offers of his grace, and refusing to submit to the terms of his gospel, which would have saved them both from the curse of the *law of God* and from the dominion of the *law of sin*.

[1.] Christ called to them, to warn them of their danger; he *stretched out his hand* to offer them mercy, nay, to help them out of their miserable condition, *stretched out his hand* for them to *take hold of*, but they *refused and no man regarded*; some were careless and never heeded it, nor took notice of what was said to them; others were wilful, and, though they could not avoid hearing the will of Christ, yet they gave him a flat denial, they refused, v. 24. They were in love with their folly, and would not be made wise. They were obstinate to all the methods that were taken to reclaim them. God *stretched out his hand* in mercies bestowed upon them, and, when those would not work upon them, in corrections, but all were in vain; they regarded the operations of his hand no more than the declarations of his mouth.

[2.] Christ reproved and counselled them, not only reproved them for what they did amiss, but counselled them to do better (those are *reproofs of instruction* and evidences of love and good-will), but they *set at nought all his counsel* as not worth heeding, and *would none of his reproof*, as if it were below them to be reproved by him and as if they had never done any

thing that deserved reproof, v. 25. This is repeated (v. 30): “They *would none of my counsel*, but rejected it with disdain; they called reproofs reproaches, and took them as an insult (²⁴⁶⁰Jeremiah 6:10); nay, *they despised all my reproof*, as if it were all a jest, and not worth taking notice of.” Note, Those are marked for ruin that are deaf to reproof and good counsel.

[3.] They were exhorted to submit to the government of right reason and religion, but they rebelled against both. *First*, Reason should not rule them, for *they hated knowledge* (v. 29), hated the light of divine truth because it discovered to them the evil of their deeds, ⁴⁸⁰John 3:20. They hated to be told that which they could not bear to know. *Secondly*, Religion could not rule them, for they *did not choose the fear of the Lord*, but chose to walk in the way of *their heart and in the sight of their eyes*. They were pressed to *set God always before them*, but they chose rather to cast him and his fear *behind their backs*. Note, Those who do not *choose the fear of the Lord* show that they *have no knowledge*.

(2.) The sentence is pronounced, and it is certainly ruining. Those that will not submit to God's government will certainly perish under his wrath and curse, and the gospel itself will not relieve them. They would not take the benefit of God's mercy when it was offered them, and therefore justly fall as victims to his justice, ²¹⁹¹Proverbs 29:1. The threatenings here will have their full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day and the eternal misery of the impenitent, of which yet there are some earnest in present judgments.

[1.] Now sinners are in prosperity and secure; they live at ease, and set sorrow at defiance. But, *First*, Their *calamity will come* (v. 26); sickness will come, and those diseases which they shall apprehend to be the very arrests and harbingers of death; other troubles will come, in mind, in estate, which will convince them of their folly in setting God at a distance. *Secondly*, Their calamity will put them into a great fright. Fear seizes them, and they apprehend that bad will be worse. When public judgments are abroad the *sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness surprises the hypocrites*. Death is the *king of terrors* to them (⁴⁸⁵²Job 15:21, etc.; 18:11, etc.); this fear will be their continual torment. *Thirdly*, According to their fright will it be to them. Their *fear shall come* (the thing they were afraid of shall befall them); it shall *come as desolation*, as a mighty deluge bearing down all before it; it shall be their *destruction*, their total and final destruction; and it shall come *as a whirlwind*, which suddenly and forcibly

drives away all the chaff. Note, Those that will not admit the fear of God lay themselves open to all other fears, and their fears will not prove causeless. *Fourthly*, Their fright will then be turned into despair: *Distress and anguish shall come upon them*, for, having fallen into the pit they were afraid of, they shall see no way to escape, v. 27. Saul cries out (¹⁰⁹2 Samuel 1:9), *Anguish has come upon me*; and in hell there is *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth* for anguish, *tribulation and anguish to the soul* of the sinner, the fruit of the *indignation and wrath of the righteous God*, ⁴¹⁸Romans 2:8, 9.

[2.] Now God pities their folly, but he will then *laugh at their calamity* (v. 26): “I also will laugh at your distress, even as you laughed at my counsel.” Those that ridicule religion will thereby but make themselves ridiculous before all the world. The righteous will *laugh at them* (⁴⁵⁶Psalm 52:6), for God himself will. It intimates that they shall be for ever shut out of God's compassions; they have so long sinned against mercy that they have now quite sinned it away. *His eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity*. Nay, his justice being glorified in their ruin, he will be pleased with it, though now he would rather they should *turn and live*. *Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries*.

[3.] Now God is ready to hear their prayers and to meet them with mercy, if they would but seek to him for it; but then the door will be shut, and they shall cry in vain (v. 28): “*Then shall they call upon me* when it is too late, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. They would then gladly be beholden to that mercy which now they reject and make light of; but *I will not answer*, because, when I called, they would not answer;” all the answer then will be, *Depart from me, I know you not*. This has been the case of some even in this life, as of Saul, whom God answered not by *Urim or prophets*; but, ordinarily, while there is life there is room for prayer and hope of speeding, and therefore this must refer to the inexorable justice of the last judgment. Then those that slighted God will *seek him early* (that is, earnestly), but in vain; *they shall not find him*, because they sought him not when he might be found, ²⁸⁶Isaiah 55:6. The rich man in hell begged, but was denied.

[4.] Now they are eager upon their own way, and fond of their own devices; but then they will have enough of them (v. 31), according to the proverb, *Let men drink as they brew*; they shall *eat the fruit of their own way*; their wages shall be according to their work, and, as was their choice, *so shall their doom be*, ⁴⁶⁶Galatians 6:7, 8. Note, *First*, There is a natural

tendency in sin to destruction, ^{<3015>}James 1:15. Sinners are certainly miserable if they do but *eat the fruit of their own way*. *Secondly*, Those that perish must thank themselves, and can lay no blame upon any other. It is *their own device*; let them make their boast of it. God *chooses their delusions*, ^{<2864>}Isaiah 66:4.

[5.] Now they value themselves upon their worldly prosperity; but then that shall help to aggravate their ruin, v. 32. *First*, They are now proud that they can turn away from God and get clear of the restraints of religion; but that very thing shall slay them, the remembrance of it shall cut them to the heart. *Secondly*, They are now proud of their own security and sensuality; but *the ease of the simple* (so the margin reads it) *shall slay them*; the more secure they are the more certain and the more dreadful will their destruction be, *and the prosperity of fools shall help to destroy them*, by puffing them up with pride, gluing their hearts to the world, furnishing them with fuel for their lusts, and hardening their hearts in their evil ways.

4. He concludes with an assurance of safety and happiness to all those that submit to the instructions of wisdom (v. 33): “*Whoso hearkeneth unto me, and will be ruled by me, he shall,*”

(1.) “Be safe; he *shall dwell* under the special protection of Heaven, so that nothing shall do him any real hurt.”

(2.) “He shall be easy, and have no disquieting apprehensions of danger; he shall not only be safe from evil, but *quiet from the fear of it*.” *Though the earth be removed, yet shall not they fear*. Would we be safe from evil, and quiet from the fear of it? Let religion always rule us and the word of God be our counsellor. That is the way to *dwell safely* in this world, and to *be quiet from the fear of evil* in the other world.