

CHAPTER 15

PROVERBS 15:1

THE PROPER USE OF THE TONGUE

Solomon, as conservator of the public peace, here tells us,

1. How the peace may be kept, that we may know how in our places to keep it; it is by soft words. If wrath be risen like a threatening cloud, pregnant with storms and thunder, *a soft answer* will disperse it and turn it away. When men are provoked, speak gently to them, and give them good words, and they will be pacified, as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness (~~ORR~~Judges 8:1-3); whereas, upon a like occasion, by Jephthah's roughness, they were exasperated, and the consequences were bad, ~~ORR~~Judges 12:1-3. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded, with meekness than with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words.

2. How the peace will be broken, that we, for our parts, may do nothing towards the breaking of it. Nothing stirs up anger, and sows discord, like *grievous words*, calling foul names, as *Raca*, and *Thou fool*, upbraiding men with their infirmities and infelicities, their extraction or education, or any thing that lessens them and makes them mean; scornful spiteful reflections, by which men affect to show their wit and malice, stir up the anger of others, which does but increase and inflame their own anger. Rather than lose a jest some will lose a friend and make an enemy.

PROVERBS 15:2

THE PROPER USE OF THE TONGUE

Note,

1. A good heart by the tongue becomes very useful. He that has knowledge is not only to enjoy it, for his own entertainment, but to use it, to use it

aright, for the edification of others; and it is *the tongue* that must make use of it in pious profitable discourse, in giving suitable and seasonable instructions, counsels, and comforts, with all possible expressions of humility and love, and then *knowledge is used aright*; and to him that has, and thus uses what he has, more shall be given.

2. A wicked heart by the tongue becomes very hurtful; for *the mouth of fools belches out foolishness*, which is very offensive; and the corrupt communication which proceeds from an evil treasure within (the filthiness, and foolish talking, and jesting) corrupts the good manners of some and debauches them, and grieves the good hearts of others and disturbs them.

PROVERBS 15:3

THE PROPER USE OF THE TONGUE

The great truths of divinity are of great use to enforce the precepts of morality, and none more than this — That the eye of God is always upon the children of men.

1. An eye to discern all, not only from which nothing can be concealed, but by which every thing is actually inspected, and nothing overlooked or looked slightly upon: *The eyes of the Lord are in every place*; for he not only sees all from on high (~~1383~~ Psalm 33:13), but he is every where present. Angels are *full of eyes* (~~6048~~ Revelation 4:8), but God is all eye. It denotes not only his omniscience, that he sees all, but his universal providence, that he upholds and governs all. Secret sins, services, and sorrows, are under his eye.

2. An eye to distinguish both persons and actions. He *beholds the evil and the good*, is displeased with the evil and approves of the good, and will judge men according to the sight of his eyes, ~~1016~~ Psalm 1:6; 11:4. The wicked shall not go unpunished, nor the righteous unrewarded, for God has his eye upon both and knows their true character; this speaks as much comfort to saints as terror to sinners.

~~116~~ PROVERBS 15:4

THE PROPER USE OF THE TONGUE

Note,

1. A good tongue is healing, healing to wounded consciences by comforting them, to sin-sick souls by convincing them, to peace and love when it is broken by accommodating differences, compromising matters in variance, and reconciling parties at variance; this is the healing of the tongue, which *is a tree of life*, the leaves of which have a sanative virtue, ~~622~~ Revelation 22:2. He that knows how to discourse will make the place he lives in a paradise.

2. An evil tongue is wounding (*perverseness*, passion, falsehood, and filthiness *there, are a breach in the spirit*); it wounds the conscience of the evil speaker, and occasions either guilt or grief to the hearers, and both are to be reckoned *breaches in the spirit*. Hard words indeed break no bones, but many a heart has been broken by them.

~~116~~ PROVERBS 15:5

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

Hence,

1. Let superiors be admonished to give instruction and reproof to those that are under their charge, as they will answer it in the day of account. They must not only instruct with the light of knowledge, but reprove with the heat of zeal; and both these must be done with the authority and affection of a father, and must be continued, though the desired effect be not immediately perceived. If the instruction be despised, give reproof, and rebuke sharply. It is indeed against the grain with good-humoured men to find fault, and make those about them uneasy; but better so than to suffer them to go on undisturbed in the way to ruin.

2. Let inferiors be admonished, not only to submit to instruction and reproof (even hardships must be submitted to), but to value them as favours and not despise them, to make use of them for their direction, and

always to have a regard to them; this will be an evidence that they are wise and a means of making them so; whereas he that slights his good education is a fool and is likely to live and die one.

PROVERBS 15:6

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

Note,

1. Where righteousness is riches are, and the comforts of them: *In the house of the righteous is much treasure.* Religion teaches men to be diligent, temperate, and just, and by these means, ordinarily, the estate is increased. But that is not all: God *blesses the habitation of the just*, and that blessing makes rich without trouble. Or, if there be not much of this world's goods, yet where there is grace there is true treasure; and those who have but little, if they have a heart to be therewith content, and to enjoy the comfort of that little, it is enough; it is all riches. The righteous perhaps are not themselves enriched, but there is treasure in their house, a blessing in store, which their children after them may reap the benefit of. A wicked worldly man is only for having his belly filled with those treasures, his own sensual appetite gratified (¹⁵⁷⁴Psalm 17:14); but a righteous man's first care is for his soul and then for his seed, to have treasure in his heart and then in his house, which his relations and those about him may have the benefit of.

2. Where wickedness is, though there may be riches, yet there is vexation of spirit with them: *In the revenues of the wicked*, the great incomes they have, *there is trouble*; for there is guilt and a curse; there is pride and passion, and envy and contention; and those are troublesome lusts, which rob them of the joy of their revenues and make them troublesome to their neighbours.

~~217~~ PROVERBS 15:7

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

This is to the same purport with v. 2, and shows what a blessing a wise man is and what a burden a fool is to those about him. Only here observe further,

1. That we then use knowledge aright when we disperse it, not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it, but *give a portion* of this spiritual alms *to seven and also to eight*, not only be communicative, but diffusive, of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge, must teach some that they may teach others, and so it is dispersed.
2. That it is not only a fault to *pour out foolishness*, but it is a shame not to *disperse knowledge*, at least not to drop some wise word or other: *The heart of the foolish does not so*; it has nothing to disperse that is good, or, if it had, has neither skill nor will to do good with it and therefore is little worth.

~~218~~ PROVERBS 15:8

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

Note,

1. God so hates wicked people, whose hearts are malicious and their lives mischievous, that even their *sacrifices are an abomination* to him. God has sacrifices brought him even by wicked men, to stop the mouth of conscience and to keep up their reputation in the world, as malefactors come to a sanctuary, not because it is a holy place, but because it shelters them from justice; but their sacrifices, though ever so costly, are not accepted of God, because not offered in sincerity nor from a good principle; they dissemble with God, and in their conversations give the lie to their devotions, and for that reason they are *an abomination* to him, because they are made a cloak for sin, ~~2174~~ Proverbs 7:14. See ~~2111~~ Isaiah 1:11.

2. God has such a love for upright good people that, though they are not at the expense of a sacrifice (he himself has provided that), their *prayer is a delight* to him. Praying graces are his own gift, and the work of his own Spirit in them, with which he is well pleased. He not only answers their prayers, but delights in their addresses to him, and in doing them good.

~~<189>~~ PROVERBS 15:9

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

This is a reason of what was said in the foregoing verse.

1. *The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God*, not for want of some nice points of ceremony, but because *their way*, the whole course and tenour of their conversation, is wicked, and consequently an abomination to him. Sacrifices for sin were not accepted of those that resolved to go on in sin, and were to the highest degree abominable if intended to obtain a connivance at sin and a permission to go on in it.

2. Therefore *the prayer of the upright is his delight*, because he is a friend of God, and *he loves him who*, though he have not yet attained, is *following after righteousness*, aiming at it and pressing towards it, as St. Paul, ~~<183>~~Philippians 3:13.

~~<150>~~ PROVERBS 15:10

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

This shows that those who cannot bear to be corrected must expect to be destroyed.

1. It is common for those who have known the way of righteousness, but have forsaken it, to reckon it a great affront to be reprov'd and admonish'd. They are very uneasy at reproof; they cannot, they will not, bear it; nay, because they hate to be reformed, they hate to be reprov'd, and hate those who deal faithfully and kindly with them. Of all sinners, reproofs are worst resented by apostates.

2. It is certain that those who will not be reprov'd will be ruined: *He that*

hates reproof, and hardens his heart against it, is joined to his idols; let him alone. He *shall die*, and perish for ever, in his sins, since he would not be parted from his sins. ^{<425>}2 Chronicles 25:15, *I know that God has determined to destroy thee*, because thou couldst not bear to be reprov'd; see also ^{<291>}Proverbs 29:1.

^{<151>}PROVERBS 15:11

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

This confirms what was said (v. 3) concerning God's omnipresence, in order to his judging of evil and good.

1. God knows all things, even those things that are hidden from the eyes of all living: *Hell and destruction are before the Lord*, not only the centre of the earth, and its subterraneous caverns, but the grave, and all the dead bodies which are there buried out of our sight; they are all *before the Lord*, all under his eye, so that none of them can be lost or be to seek when they are to be raised again. He knows where every man lies buried, even Moses, even those that are buried in the greatest obscurity; nor needs he any monument with a *Hic jacet — Here he lies*, to direct him. The place of the damned in particular, and all their torments, which are inexpressible, the state of separate souls in general, and all their circumstances, are under God's eye. The word here used for *destruction* is *Abaddon*, which is one of the devil's names, ^{<691>}Revelation 9:11. That destroyer, though he deceives us, cannot evade or elude the divine cognizance. God examines him whence he comes (^{<801>}Job 1:7), and sees through all his disguises though he is sly, and subtle, and swift, ^{<836>}Job 26:6.

2. He knows particularly *the hearts of the children of men*. If he sees through the depths and wiles of Satan himself, *much more* can he search men's hearts, though they be deceitful, since they learned all their fraudulent arts of Satan. *God is greater than our hearts*, and knows them better than we know them ourselves, and therefore is an infallible Judge of every man's character, ^{<3013>}Hebrews 4:13.

~~15~~ PROVERBS 15:12

WISDOM AND FOLLY

A scorner is one that not only makes a jest of God and religion, but bids defiance to the methods employed for his conviction and reformation, and, as an evidence of that,

1. He cannot endure the checks of his own conscience, nor will he suffer it to deal plainly with him: *He loves not to reprove him* (so some read it); he cannot endure to retire into his own heart and commune seriously with that, will not admit of any free thought or fair reasoning with himself, nor let his own heart smite him, if he can help it. That man's case is sad who is afraid of being acquainted and of arguing with himself.
2. He cannot endure the advice and admonitions of his friends: *He will not go unto the wise*, lest they should give him wise counsel. We ought not only to bid the wise welcome when they come to us, but to go to them, as beggars to the rich man's door for an alms; but this the scorner will not do, for fear of being told of his faults and prevailed upon to reform.

~~15~~ PROVERBS 15:13

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Here,

1. Harmless mirth is recommended to us, as that which contributes to the health of the body, making men lively and fit for business, and to the acceptableness of the conversation, making the face to shine and rendering us pleasant one to another. A cheerful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great ornament to religion, puts a further lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good.
2. Hurtful melancholy is what we are cautioned against, as a great enemy to us, both in our devotion and in our conversation: *By sorrow of the heart*, when it has got dominion and plays the tyrant, as it will be apt to do it if be indulged awhile, *the spirit is broken* and sunk, and becomes unfit

for the service of God. *The sorrow of the world works death.* Let us therefore *weep as though we wept not*, in justice to ourselves, as well as in conformity to God and his providence.

~~3154~~ PROVERBS 15:14

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Here are two things to be wondered at: —

1. A wise man not satisfied with his wisdom, but still seeking the increase of it; the more he has the more he would have: *The heart of him that has understanding*, rejoices so in the knowledge it has attained to that it is still coveting more, and in the use of the means of knowledge is still labouring for more, *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ.* *Si dixisti, Sufficit, periisti* — *If you say, I have enough, you are undone.*

2. A fool well satisfied with his folly and not seeking the cure of it. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy. Vain mirth and sensual pleasures are its delight, and with these it can rest contented, flattering itself in these foolish ways.

~~3155~~ PROVERBS 15:15

WISDOM AND FOLLY

See here what a great difference there is between the condition and temper of some and others of the children of men.

1. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit, and all their days are evil days, like those of old age, and days of which they say they *have no pleasure in them.* They *eat in darkness* (~~3157~~ Ecclesiastes 5:17) and never *eat with pleasure*, ~~3125~~ Job 21:25. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! Such are not to be censured or despised, but pitied and prayed for, succoured and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet, merry as we are at present.

2. Others enjoy great prosperity and are of a cheerful spirit; and they have not only good days, but have *a continual feast*; and if in the abundance of all things they serve God with gladness of heart, and it is oil to the wheels of their obedience (all this, and heaven too), then they serve a good Master. But let not such feast without fear; a sudden change may come; therefore *rejoice with trembling*.

PROVERBS 15:16-17

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Solomon had said in the foregoing verse that he who has not a large estate, or a great income, but a cheerful spirit, has *a continual feast*; Christian contentment, and joy in God, make the life easy and pleasant; now here he tells us what is necessary to that cheerfulness of spirit which will furnish a man with *a continual feast*, though he has but little in the world — holiness and love.

I. Holiness. *A little*, if we manage it and enjoy it in *the fear of the Lord*, if we keep a good conscience and go on in the way of duty, and serve God faithfully with the little we have, will be more comfortable, and turn to a better account, *than great treasure and trouble therewith*. Observe here,

1. It is often the lot of those that fear God to have but a little of this world. *The poor receive the gospel*, and poor they still are, ^{<3415>}James 2:5.

2. Those that have *great treasure* have often *great trouble therewith*; it is so far from making them easy that it increases their care and hurry. *The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep*.

3. If great treasure bring trouble with it, it is for want of the fear of God. If those that have great estates would do their duty with them, and then trust God with them, their treasure would not have so much trouble attending it.

4. It is therefore far better, and more desirable, to have but a little of the world and to have it with a good conscience, to keep up communion with God, and enjoy him in it, and live by faith, than to have the greatest plenty and live without God in the world.

II. Love. Next to the fear of God, peace with all men is necessary to the comfort of this life.

1. If *brethren dwell together in unity*, if they are friendly, and hearty, and pleasant, both in their daily meals and in more solemn entertainments, that will make *a dinner of herbs* a feast sufficient; though the fare be coarse, and the estate so small that they can afford no better, yet love will sweeten it and they may be as merry over it as if they had all dainties.

2. If there be mutual enmity and strife, though there be a whole ox for dinner, a fat ox, there can be no comfort in it; the leaven of malice, of hating and being hated, is enough to sour it all. Some refer it to him that makes the entertainment; better have a slender dinner and be heartily welcome than a table richly spread with a grudging evil eye.

*Cum torvo vultu mihi conula nulla placebit,
Cum placido vultu conula ulla placet.*

*The most sumptuous entertainment, presented with
a sullen brow, would offend me; while the plainest
repast, presented kindly would delight me.*

~~158~~ PROVERBS 15:18

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Here is,

1. Passion the great make-bate. Thence *come wars and fightings*. Anger strikes the fire which sets cities and churches into a flame: *A wrathful man*, with his peevish passionate reflections, *stirs up strife*, and sets people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though ever so trifling. When men carry their resentments too far, one quarrel still produces another.

2. Meekness the great peace-maker: *He that is slow to anger* not only *prevents* strife, that it be not kindled, but *appeases* it if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, unites those again that have fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake.

~~159~~ PROVERBS 15:19

WISDOM AND FOLLY

See here,

1. Whence those difficulties arise which men pretend to meet with in the way of their duty, and to be insuperable; they arise not from any thing in the nature of the duty, but from the slothfulness of those that have really no mind to it. Those that have no heart to their work pretend that their way is hedged up with thorns, and they cannot do their work at all (as if God were a hard Master, reaping where he had not sown), at least that their way is strewed with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger; and therefore they go about it with as much reluctance as if they were to go barefoot through a thorny hedge.
2. How these imaginary difficulties may be conquered. An honest desire and endeavour to do our duty will, by the grace of God, make it easy, and we shall find it strewed with roses: *The way of the righteous is made plain*; it is easy to be trodden and not rough, easy to be found, and not intricate.

~~159~~ PROVERBS 15:20

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Observe here,

1. To the praise of good children, that they are the joy of their parents, who ought to have joy of them, having taken so much care and pains about them. And it adds much to the satisfaction of those that are good if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years, when evil days come.
2. To the shame of wicked children, that by their wickedness they put contempt upon their parents, slight their authority, and make an ill requital for their kindness: *A foolish son despises his mother*, that had most sorrow with him and perhaps had too much indulged him, which makes his sin in despising her the more sinful and her sorrow the more sorrowful.

~~151~~ PROVERBS 15:21

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Note,

1. It is the character of a wicked man that he takes pleasure in sin; he has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily, and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from it when he has swallowed it: *Folly is joy to him*; the folly of others is so, and his own much more. He sins, not only without regret, but with delight, not only repents not of it, but makes his boast of it. This is a certain sign of one that is graceless.
2. It is the character of a wise and good man that he makes conscience of his duty. A fool lives at large, walks at all adventures, by no rule, acts with no sincerity or steadiness; *but a man of understanding*, the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened by the Spirit (and those that have not a good understanding have no understanding), *walks uprightly*, lives a sober, orderly, regular life, and studies in every thing to conform himself to the will of God; and this is a constant pleasure and *joy to him*. But what foolishness remains in him, or proceeds from him at any time, is a grief to him, and he is ashamed of it. By these characters we may try ourselves.

~~152~~ PROVERBS 15:22

WISDOM AND FOLLY

See here,

1. Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice: *Men's purposes are disappointed*, their measures broken, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way. If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass; circumstances defeat them which, with a little consultation, might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule, both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly and of one's own

head. *Plus vident oculi quam oculus* — *Many eyes see more than one*. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our friends: *In the multitude of counsellors* (provided they be discreet and honest, and will not give counsel with a spirit of contradiction) *purposes are established*. Solomon's son made no good use of this proverb when he acquiesced not in the counsel of the old men, but because he would have a *multitude of counsellors*, regarding number more than weight, advised with the young men.

~~3153~~ PROVERBS 15:23

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Note,

1. We speak wisely when we speak seasonably: *The answer of the mouth* will be our credit and joy when it is pertinent and to the purpose, and is *spoken in due season*, when it is needed and will be regarded, and, as we say, hits the joint. Many a good word comes short of doing the good it might have done, for want of being well-timed. Nor is any thing more the beauty of discourse than to have a proper answer ready off-hand, just when there is occasion for it, and it comes in well.

2. If we speak wisely and well, it will redound to our own comfort and to the advantage of others: *A man has joy by the answer of his mouth*; he may take a pleasure, but may by no means take a pride, in having spoken so acceptably and well that the hearers admire him and say, "*How good is it, and how much good does it do!*"

~~3152~~ PROVERBS 15:24

WISDOM AND FOLLY

The way of wisdom and holiness is here recommended to us,

1. As very safe and comfortable: It is *the way of life*, the way that leads to eternal life, in which we shall find the joy and satisfaction which will be

the life of the soul, and at the end of which we shall find the perfection of blessedness. Be wise and live. It is the way to escape that misery which we cannot but see ourselves exposed to, and in danger of. It is to *depart from hell beneath*, from the snares of hell, the temptations of Satan, and all his wiles, from the pains of hell, that everlasting destruction which our sins have deserved.

2. As very sublime and honourable: *It is above*. A good man sets his *affections on things above*, and deals in those things. His *conversation is in heaven*; his way leads directly thither; there his treasure is, *above*, out of the reach of enemies, above the changes of this lower world. A good man is truly noble and great; his desires and designs are high, and he lives above the common rate of other men. It is above the capacity and out of the sight of foolish men.

~~2165~~ PROVERBS 15:25

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Note,

1. Those that are elevated God delights to abase, and commonly does it in the course of his providence: *The proud*, that magnify themselves, bid defiance to the God above them and trample on all about them, are such as God resists and *will destroy*, not them only, but *their houses*, which they are proud of and are confident of the continuance and perpetuity of. Pride is the ruin of multitudes.

2. Those that are dejected God delights to support, and often does it remarkably: *He will establish the border of the poor widow*, which proud injurious men break in upon, and which the poor widow is not herself able to defend and make good. It is the honour of God to protect the weak and appear for those that are oppressed.

~~156~~ PROVERBS 15:26

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words, but they come all to one; for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts from which they proceed, so that,

1. *The thoughts and words of the wicked*, which are, like themselves, wicked, which aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, *are an abomination to the Lord*; he is displeased at them and will reckon for them. The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart and all that passes and repasses there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it.

2. The thoughts and *words of the pure*, being pure like themselves, clean, honest, and sincere, *are pleasant words* and pleasant thoughts, well-pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity. It may be understood both of their devotions to God (*the words of their mouth and the meditations of their heart*, in prayer and praise, are *acceptable to God*, ~~154~~ Psalm 19:14; 69:13) and of their discourses with men, tending to edification. Both are pleasant when they come from a pure, a purified, heart.

~~157~~ PROVERBS 15:27

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

Note,

1. Those that are covetous entail trouble upon their families: *He that is greedy of gain*, and therefore makes himself a slave to the world, rises up early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness, in pursuit of it — he that hurries, and puts himself and all about him upon the stretch, in business, frets and vexes at every loss and disappointment, and quarrels with every body that stands in the way of his profit — he *troubles his own house*, is a burden and vexation to his children and servants. He that, in his greediness of gain, takes bribes, and uses unlawful ways of getting money,

leaves a curse with what he gets to those that come after him, which sooner or later will bring trouble into the house, ~~<15B>~~Habakkuk 2:9, 10.

2. Those that are generous as well as righteous entail a blessing upon their families: *He that hates gifts*, that shakes his hands from holding the bribes that are thrust into his hand to pervert justice and abhors all sinful indirect ways of getting money — that hates to be paltry and mercenary, and is willing, if there be occasion, to do good gratis — he shall live; he shall have the comfort of life, shall live in prosperity and reputation; his name and family shall live and continue.

~~<15B>~~PROVERBS 15:28

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

Here is,

1. A good man proved to be a wise man by this, that he governs his tongue well; he that does so *the same is a perfect man*, ~~<50B>~~James 3:2. It is part of the character of a righteous man that being convinced of the account he must give of his words, and of the good and bad influence of them upon others, he makes conscience of speaking truly (it is his *heart* that *answers*, that is, he speaks as he thinks, and dares not do otherwise, he *speaks the truth in his heart*, ~~<15B>~~Psalm 15:2), and of speaking pertinently and profitably, and therefore he *studies to answer*, that his speech may be with grace, ~~<16B>~~Nehemiah 2:4; 5:7.

2. A wicked man is proved to be a fool by this, that he never heeds what he says, but his *mouth pours out evil things*, to the dishonour of God and religion, his own reproach, and the hurt of others. Doubtless that is an evil heart which thus overflows with evil.

~~<15B>~~PROVERBS 15:29

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

Note,

1. God sets himself at a distance from those that set him at defiance: *The wicked say to the Almighty, Depart from us*, and he is, accordingly, *far from them*; he does not manifest himself to them, has no communion with them, will not hear them, will not help them, no, not in the time of their need. They shall be for ever banished from his presence and he will behold them afar off. *Depart from me, you cursed.*

2. He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy who draw nigh to him in a way of duty: *He hears the prayer of the righteous*, accepts it, is well pleased with it, and will grant an answer of peace to it. It is *the prayer of a righteous man that avails much*, ^{<15>}James 5:16. *He is nigh to them, a present help, in all that they call upon him for.*

<15> PROVERBS 15:30

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

Two things are here pronounced pleasant: —

1. It is pleasant to have a good prospect to see the light of the sun (^{<210>}Ecclesiastes 11:7) and by it to see the wonderful works of God, with which this lower world is beautified and enriched. Those that want the mercy know how to value it; how would *the light of the eyes rejoice their hearts!* The consideration of this should make us thankful for our eyesight.

2. It is more pleasant to have *a good name*, a name for good things with God and good people; this *is as precious ointment*, ^{<200>}Ecclesiastes 7:1. *It makes the bones fat*; it gives a secret pleasure, and that which is strengthening. It is also very comfortable to hear (as some understand it) *a good report* concerning others; a good man has no greater joy than to hear that his friends walk in the truth.

<15> PROVERBS 15:31

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Note,

1. It is the character of a wise man that he is very willing to be reprov'd, and therefore chooses to converse with those that, both by their words and

example, will show him what is amiss in him: *The ear that can take the reproof* will love the reprover. Faithful friendly reproofs are here called *the reproofs of life*, not only because they are to be given in a lively manner, and with a prudent zeal (and we must reprove by our lives as well as by our doctrine), but because, where they are well-taken, they are means of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life, and (as some think) to distinguish them from rebukes and reproaches for well-doing, which are rather reproofs of death, which we must not regard nor be influenced by.

2. Those that are so wise as to bear reproof well will hereby be *made wiser* (²⁰⁰⁹Proverbs 9:9), and come at length to be numbered among the wise men of the age, and will have both ability and authority to reprove and instruct others. Those that learn well, and obey well, are likely in time to teach well and rule well.

PROVERBS 15:32

WISDOM AND FOLLY

See here,

1. The folly of those that will not be taught, that *refuse instruction*, that will not heed it, but turn their backs upon it, or will not hear it, but turn their hearts against it. They *refuse correction* (margin); they will not *take it*, no, not from God himself, but kick against the pricks. Those that do so *despise their own souls*; they show that they have a low and mean opinion of them, and are in little care and concern about them, considered as rational and immortal, instruction being designed to cultivate reason and prepare for the immortal state. The fundamental error of sinners is undervaluing their own souls; therefore they neglect to provide for them, abuse them, expose them, prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body.

2. The wisdom of those that are willing, not only to be taught, but to be reproved: *He that hears reproof*, and amends the faults he is reproved for, *gets understanding*, by which his soul is secured from bad ways and directed in good ways, and thereby he both evidences the value he has for his own soul and puts true honour upon it.

PROVERBS 15:33

WISDOM AND FOLLY

See here how much it is our interest, as well as duty,

- 1.** To submit to our God, and keep up a reverence for him: *The fear of the Lord*, as it is *the beginning of wisdom*, so it is *the instruction and correction of wisdom*; the principles of religion, closely adhered to, will improve our knowledge, rectify our mistakes, and be the best and surest guide of our way. An awe of God upon our spirits will put us upon the wisest counsels and chastise us when we say or do unwisely.
- 2.** To stoop to our brethren, and keep up a respect for them. Where there is humility there is a happy presage of honour and preparative for it. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted here and hereafter.