

# CHAPTER 30

This and the following chapter are an appendix to Solomon's proverbs; but they are both expressly called prophecies in the first verses of both, by which it appears that the penmen of them, whoever they were, were divinely inspired. This chapter was penned by one that bears the name of "Agur Ben Jakeh." What tribe he was of, or when he lived, we are not told; what he wrote, being indited by the Holy Ghost, is here kept upon record. We have here,

- I.** His confession of faith (v. 1-6).
- II.** His prayer (v. 7-9).
- III.** A caution against wronging servants (v. 10).
- IV.** Four wicked generations (v. 11-14).
- V.** Four things insatiable (v. 15, 16), to which is added fair warning to undutiful children (v. 17).
- VI.** Four things unsearchable (v. 18-20).
- VII.** Four things intolerable (v. 21-23).
- VIII.** Four things little and wise (v. 24-28).
- IX.** Four things stately (v. 29 to the end).

## ~~END~~ PROVERBS 30:1-6

### THE WORDS OF AGUR

Some make *Agur* to be not the name of this author, but his character; he was a *collector* (so it signifies), a gatherer, one that did not compose things himself, but collected the wise sayings and observations of others, made abstracts of the writings of others, which some think is the reason why he says (v. 3), "*I have not learned wisdom myself, but have been a scribe, or amanuensis, to other wise and learned men.*" Note, We must not bury our talent, though it be but one, but, as we have received the gift, so minister the same, if it be but to collect what others have written. But we rather suppose it to be his name, which, no doubt, was well known then,

though not mentioned elsewhere in scripture. *Ithiel* and *Ucal* are mentioned, either,

**1.** As the names of his pupils, whom he instructed, or who consulted him as an oracle, having a great opinion of his wisdom and goodness. Probably they wrote from him what he dictated, as Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah, and by their means it was preserved, as they were ready to attest it to be his, for it was spoken to them; they were two witnesses of it. Or,

**2.** As the subject of his discourse. *Ithiel* signifies *God with me*, the application of *Immanuel*, *God with us*. The word calls him *God with us*; faith appropriates this, and calls him “*God with me*, who loved me, and gave himself for me, and into union and communion with whom I am admitted.” *Ucal* signifies *the Mighty One*, for it is upon one that is mighty that help is laid for us. Many good interpreters therefore apply this to the Messiah, for to him all the prophecies bear witness, and why not this then? It is what Agur spoke concerning *Ithiel*, even concerning *Ithiel* (that is the name on which the stress is laid) *with us*, <sup>צוֹרָא</sup> Isaiah 7:14.

Three things the prophet here aims at: —

**I.** To abase himself. Before he makes confession of his faith he makes confession of his folly and the weakness and deficiency of reason, which make it so necessary that we be guided and governed by faith. Before he speaks concerning the Saviour he speaks of himself as needing a Saviour, and as nothing without him; we must go out of ourselves before we go into Jesus Christ.

**1.** He speaks of himself as wanting a righteousness, and having done foolishly, very foolishly. When he reflects upon himself he owns, *Surely I am more brutish than any man. Every man has become brutish*, <sup>צוֹרָא</sup> Jeremiah 10:14. But he that knows his own heart knows so much more evil of himself than he does of any other that he cries out, “*Surely I cannot but think that I am more brutish than any man*; surely no man has such a corrupt deceitful heart as I have. I have acted as one that has *not the understanding* of Adam, as one that is wretchedly degenerated from the knowledge and righteousness in which man was at first created; nay, I have not the common sense and reason of a man, else I should not have done as I have done.” Agur, when he was applied to by others as wiser than most, acknowledged himself more foolish than any. Whatever high

opinion others may have of us, it becomes us to have low thoughts of ourselves.

2. He speaks of himself as wanting a revelation to guide him in the ways of truth and wisdom. He owns (v. 3) “*I neither learned wisdom by any power of my own (the depths of it cannot be fathomed by my line and plummet) nor know I the knowledge of the holy ones, the angels, our first parents in innocency, nor of the holy things of God; I can get no insight into them, nor make any judgment of them, further than God is pleased to make them known to me.*” The natural man, the natural powers, perceive not, nay, they *receive not, the things of the Spirit of God*. Some suppose Agur to be asked, as Apollo's oracle was of old, *Who was the wisest man?* The answer is, *He that is sensible of his own ignorance, especially in divine things. Hoc tantum scio, me nihil scire — All that I know is that I know nothing.*

II. To advance Jesus Christ, and the Father in him (v. 4): *Who ascended up into heaven, etc.*

1. Some understand this of God and of his works, which are both incomparable and unsearchable. He challenges all mankind to give an account of the heavens above, of the winds, the waters, the earth: “Who can pretend to have *ascended up to heaven*, to take a view of the orbs above, and then to have descended, to give us a description of them? Who can pretend to have had the command of the winds, to have grasped them in his hand and managed them, as God does, or to have bound the waves of the sea with a swaddling band, as God has done? Who has *established the ends of the earth*, or can describe the strength of its foundations or the extent of its limits? Tell me what is *the man's name* who can undertake to vie with God or to be of his cabinet-council, or, if he be dead, what is his name to whom he has bequeathed this great secret.”

2. Others refer it to Christ, to Ithiel and Ucal, the Son of God, for it is the Son's name, as well as the Father's, that is here enquired after, and a challenge given to any to vie with him. We must now exalt Christ as one revealed; they then magnified him as one concealed, as one they had heard something of but had very dark and defective ideas of. *We have heard the fame of him with our ears*, but cannot describe him (~~xxxv~~ Job 28:22); certainly it is God that has *gathered the wind in his fists and bound the waters as in a garment*; but *what is his name?* It is, *I am that I am*

(<sup><184</sup>Exodus 3:14), a name to be adored, not to be understood. What is *his Son's name*, by whom he does all these things? The Old-Testament saints expected the Messiah to be the *Son of the Blessed*, and he is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. Note, The great Redeemer, in the glories of his providence and grace, can neither be paralleled nor found out to perfection.

(1.) The glories of the kingdom of his grace are unsearchable and unparalleled; for who besides has *ascended into heaven and descended*? Who besides is perfectly acquainted with both worlds, and has himself a free correspondence with both, and is therefore fit to settle a correspondence between them, as Mediator, as Jacob's ladder? He was *in heaven* in the *Father's bosom* (<sup><101</sup>John 1:1, 18); thence he descended to take our nature upon him; and never was there such condescension. In that nature he again ascended (<sup><102</sup>Ephesians 4:9), to receive the promised glories of his exalted state; and who besides has done this? (<sup><106</sup>Romans 10:6).

(2.) The glories of the kingdom of his providence are likewise unsearchable and unparalleled. The same that reconciles heaven and earth was the Creator of both and governs and disposes of all. His government of the three lower elements of *air*, *water*, and *earth*, is here particularized.

[1.] The motions of the air are of his directing. Satan pretends to be *the prince of the power of the air*, but even there Christ has *all power*; he *rebuked the winds* and they obeyed him.

[2.] The bounds of the water are of his appointing: He *binds the waters as in a garment*; *hitherto they shall come, and no further*, (<sup><103</sup>Job 38:9-11).

[3.] The foundations of the earth are of his establishing. He founded it at first; he upholds it still. If Christ had not interposed, the foundations of the earth would have sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground, for man's sin. Who and what is the mighty He that does all this? We cannot *find out God*, nor the *Son of God, unto perfection*. *Oh the depth of that knowledge!*

**III.** To assure us of the truth of the word of God, and to recommend it to us, v. 5, 6. Agur's pupils expect to be instructed by him in the things of God. "Alas!" says he, "I cannot undertake to instruct you; go to the word of God; see what he has there revealed of himself, and of his mind and

will; you need know no more than what that will teach you, and that you may rely upon as sure and sufficient. *Every word of God is pure*; there is not the least mixture of falsehood and corruption in it.” The words of men are to be heard and read with jealousy and with allowance, but there is not the least ground to suspect any deficiency in the word of God; it is *as silver purified seven times* (<sup><B06></sup>Psalm 12:6), without the least dross or alloy. *Thy word is very pure*, (<sup><B04></sup>Psalm 119:140).

**1.** It is sure, and therefore we must trust to it and venture our souls upon it. God in his word, God in his promise, is *a shield*, a sure protection, to all those that put themselves under his protection and *put their trust in him*. The word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers, (<sup><B01></sup>Psalm 46:1, 2).

**2.** It is sufficient, and therefore we must not add to it (v. 6): *Add thou not unto his words*, because they are pure and perfect. This forbids the advancing of any thing, not only in contradiction to the word of God, but in competition with it; though it be under the plausible pretence of explaining it, yet, if it pretend to be of equal authority with it, it is *adding to his words*, which is not only a reproach to them as insufficient, but opens a door to all manner of errors and corruptions; for, that one absurdity being granted, that the word of any man, or company of men, is to be received with the same faith and veneration as the word of God, a thousand follow. We must be content with what God has thought fit to make known to us of his mind, and not covet to be *wise above what is written*; for,

**(1.)** God will resent it as a heinous affront: *“He will reprove thee, will reckon with thee as a traitor against his crown and dignity, and lay thee under the heavy doom of those that add to his words, or diminish from them,”* (<sup><B02></sup>Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32).

**(2.)** We shall run ourselves into endless mistakes: *“Thou wilt be found a liar, a corrupter of the word of truth, a broacher of heresies, and guilty of the worst of forgeries, counterfeiting the broad seal of heaven, and pretending a divine mission and inspiration, when it is all a cheat. Men may be thus deceived, but God is not mocked.”*

## ~~THE~~ PROVERBS 30:7-9

### THE PRAYER OF AGUR

After Agur's confession and creed, here follows his litany, where we may observe,

**I.** The preface to his prayer: *Two things have I required* (that is, *requested*) of thee, O God! Before we go to pray it is good to consider what we need, and what the things are which we have to ask of God. — What does our case require? What do our hearts desire? What would we that God should do for us? — that we may not have to seek for our petition and request when we should be presenting it. He begs, *Deny me not before I die*. In praying, we should think of dying, and pray accordingly. “Lord, give me pardon, and peace, and grace, before I die, *before I go hence and be no more*; for, if I be not renewed and sanctified before I die, the work will not be done after; if I do not prevail in prayer before I die, prayers afterwards will not prevail, no, not *Lord, Lord*. There is none of this wisdom or working in the grave. *Deny me not thy grace*, for, if thou do, I die, I perish; if thou be silent to me, *I am like those that go down to the pit*, ~~THE~~ Psalm 28:1. *Deny me not before I die*; as long as I continue in the land of the living, let me continue under the conduct of thy grace and good providence.”

**II.** The prayer itself. The *two things* he requires are grace sufficient and food convenient.

**1.** Grace sufficient for his soul: “*Remove from me vanity and lies*; deliver me from sin, from all corrupt principles, practices, and affections, from error and mistake, which are at the bottom of all sin, from the love of the world and the things of it, which are all *vanity and a lie*.” Some understand it as a prayer for the pardon of sin, for, when God forgives sin, he removes it, he takes it away. Or, rather, it is a prayer of the same import with that, *Lead us not into temptation*. Nothing is more mischievous to us than sin, and therefore there is nothing which we should more earnestly pray against than that we may *do no evil*.

**2.** Food convenient for his body. Having prayed for the operations of divine grace, he here begs the favours of the divine Providence, but such as may tend to the good and not to the prejudice of the soul.

(1.) He prays that of God's free gift he might receive a competent portion of the good things of this life: "*Feed me with the bread of my allowance, such bread as thou thinkest fit to allow me.*" As to all the gifts of the divine Providence, we must refer ourselves to the divine wisdom. Or, "*the bread that is fit for me, as a man, a master of a family, that which is agreeable to my rank and condition in the world.*" For *as is the man so is his competency*. Our Saviour seems to refer to this when he teaches us to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread*, as this seems to refer to Jacob's vow, in which he wished for no more than *bread to eat and raiment to put on*. Food convenient for us is what we ought to be content with, though we have not dainties, varieties, and superfluities — what is for necessity, though we have not for delight and ornament; and it is what we may in faith pray for and depend upon God for.

(2.) He prays that he may be kept from every condition of life that would be a temptation to him.

[1.] He prays against the extremes of abundance and want: *Give me neither poverty nor riches*. He does not hereby prescribe to God, nor pretend to teach him what condition he shall allot to him, nor does he pray against poverty or riches absolutely, as in themselves evil, for either of them, by the grace of God, may be sanctified and be a means of good to us; but, *First*, He hereby intends to express the value which wise and good men have for a middle state of life, and, with submission to the will of God, desires that that might be his state, neither great honour nor great contempt. We must learn how to manage both (as St. Paul, ~~1~~Philippians 4:12), but rather wish to be always between both. *Optimus pecuniae modus qui nec in paupertatem cedit nec procul ... paupertate discedit* — *The best condition is that which neither implies poverty nor yet recedes far from it*. Seneca. *Secondly*, He hereby intimates a holy jealousy he had of himself, that he could not keep his ground against the temptations either of an afflicted or a prosperous condition. Others may preserve their integrity in either, but he is afraid of both, and therefore grace teaches him to pray against riches as much as nature against poverty; but *the will of the Lord be done*.

[2.] He gives a pious reason for his prayer, v. 9. He does not say, "*Lest I be rich, and cumbered with care, and envied by my neighbours, and eaten up with a multitude of servants, or, lest I be poor and trampled on, and forced to work hard and fare hard;*" but, "*Lest I be rich and sin, or poor*

and sin.” Sin is that which a good man is afraid of in every condition and under every event; witness Nehemiah (<sup><4613></sup>Nehemiah 6:13), *that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin. First*, He dreads the temptations of a prosperous condition, and therefore even deprecates that: *Lest I be full and deny thee* (as Jeshurun, who *waxed fat and kicked*, and *forsook God who made him*, <sup><4625></sup>Deuteronomy 32:15), and say, as Pharaoh in his pride, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Prosperity makes people proud and forgetful of God, as if they had no need of him and were therefore under no obligation to him. *What can the Almighty do for them?* <sup><4827></sup>Job 22:17. And therefore they will do nothing for him. Even good men are afraid of the worst sins, so deceitful do they think their own hearts to be; and they know that the greatest gains of the world will not balance the least guilt. *Secondly*, He dreads the temptations of a poor condition, and for that reason, and no other, deprecates that: *Lest I be poor and steal*. Poverty is a strong temptation to dishonesty, and such as many are overcome by, and they are ready to think it will be their excuse; but it will not bear them out at God's bar any more than at men's to say, “I stole because I was poor;” yet, if a man *steal for the satisfying of his soul when he is hungry*, it is a case of compassion (<sup><2163></sup>Proverbs 6:30) and what even those that have some principles of honesty in them may be drawn to. But observe why Agur dreads this, not because he should endanger himself by it, “Lest I steal, and be hanged for it, whipped or put in the stocks, or sold for a bondman,” as among the Jews poor thieves were, who had not wherewithal to make restitution; but lest he should dishonour God by it: *“Lest I should steal, and take the name of my God in vain*, that is, discredit my profession of religion by practices disagreeable to it.” Or, “Lest I steal, and, when I am charged with it, forswear myself.” He *therefore* dreads one sin, because it would draw on another, for the way of sin is downhill. Observe, He calls God *his God*, and *therefore* he is afraid of doing any thing to offend him because of the relation he stands in to him.

## <sup><2100></sup>PROVERBS 30:10-14

### FOUR WICKED GENERATIONS

Here is,

**I.** A caution not to abuse other people's servants any more than our own, nor to make mischief between them and their masters, for it is an ill office, invidious, and what will make a man odious, v. 10. Consider,

**1.** It is an injury to the servant, whose poor condition makes him an object of pity, and therefore it is barbarous to add affliction to him that is afflicted: *Hurt not a servant with thy tongue* (so the margin reads it); for it argues a sordid disposition to smite any body secretly with the scourge of the tongue, especially a servant, who is not a match for us, and whom we should rather protect, if his master be severe with him, than exasperate him more.

**2.** "It will perhaps be an injury to thyself. If a servant be thus provoked, perhaps he will curse thee, will accuse thee and bring thee into trouble, or give thee an ill word and blemish thy reputation, or appeal to God against thee, and imprecate *his* wrath upon thee, who is the patron and protector of oppressed innocency."

**II.** An account, upon occasion of this caution, of some wicked generations of men, that are justly abominable to all that are virtuous and good.

**1.** Such as are abusive to their parents, give them bad language and wish them ill, call them bad names and actually injure them. *There is a generation* of such; young men of that black character commonly herd together, and irritate one another against their parents. *A generation of vipers* those are who curse their natural parents, or their magistrates, or their ministers, because they cannot endure the yoke; and those are near of kin to them who, though they have not yet arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to curse their parents, yet do not bless them, cannot give them a good word, and will not pray for them.

**2.** Such as are conceited of themselves, and, under a show and pretence of sanctity, hide from others, and perhaps from themselves too, abundance of reigning wickedness in secret (v. 12); they are *pure in their own eyes*, as if they were in all respects such as they should be. They have a very good opinion of themselves and their own character, that they are not only righteous, but *rich and increased with goods* (<sup><687></sup>Revelation 3:17), and yet *are not cleansed from their filthiness*, the filthiness of their hearts, which they pretend to be the best part of them. They are, it may be, swept and garnished, but they are not washed, nor sanctified; as the Pharisees that within were *full of all uncleanness*, <sup><625></sup>Matthew 23:25, 26.

3. Such as are haughty and scornful to those about them, v. 13. He speaks of them with amazement at their intolerable pride and insolence: “*Oh how lofty are their eyes! With what disdain do they look upon their neighbours, as not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock! What a distance do they expect every body should keep; and, when they look upon themselves, how do they strut and vaunt like the peacock, thinking they make themselves illustrious when really they make themselves ridiculous!*” There is a generation of such, on whom he that *resists the proud* will pour contempt.

4. Such as are cruel to the poor and barbarous to all that lie at their mercy (v. 14); their teeth are iron and steel, *swords and knives*, instruments of cruelty, with which they *devour the poor* with the greatest pleasure imaginable, and as greedily as hungry men cut their meat and eat it. God has so ordered it that the *poor we shall always have with us*, that they shall *never cease out of the land*; but there are those who, because they hate to relieve them, would, if they could, abolish them *from the earth, from among men*, especially God's poor. Some understand it of those who wound and ruin others by slanders and false accusations, and severe censures of their everlasting state; their tongues, and their teeth too (which are likewise organs of speech), are *as swords and knives*, <sup><15704></sup>Psalm 57:4.

## ~~<1815>~~ PROVERBS 30:15-17

### FOUR WICKED GENERATIONS

He had spoken before of those that devoured the poor (v. 14), and had spoken of them last, as the worst of all the four generations there mentioned; now here he speaks of their insatiableness in doing this. The temper that puts them upon it is made up of cruelty and covetousness. Now those are *two daughters* of the *horse-leech*, its genuine offspring, that still cry, “*Give, give, give more blood, give more money;*” for the bloody are still blood-thirsty; being drunk with blood, they add thirst to their drunkenness, and will seek it yet again. Those also that *love silver* shall never *be satisfied with silver*. Thus, while from these two principles they are devouring the poor, they are continually uneasy to themselves, as David's enemies, <sup><1584></sup>Psalm 59:14, 15. Now, for the further illustration of this,

**I.** He specifies four other things which are insatiable, to which those devourers are compared, which say not, *It is enough*, or *It is wealth*. Those are never rich that are always coveting. Now these four things that are always craving are,

**1.** The grave, into which multitudes fall, and yet still more will fall, and it swallows them all up, and returns none, *Hell and destruction are never full*, <sup><127></sup>Proverbs 27:20. When it comes to our turn we shall find the grave ready for us, <sup><127></sup>Job 17:1.

**2.** The *barren womb*, which is impatient of its affliction in being barren, and cries, as Rachel did, *Give me children*.

**3.** The *parched ground* in time of drought (especially in those hot countries), which still soaks in the rain that comes in abundance upon it and in a little time wants more.

**4.** The *fire*, which, when it has consumed abundance of fuel, yet still devours all the combustible matter that is thrown into it. So insatiable are the corrupt desires of sinners, and so little satisfaction have they even in the gratification of them.

**II.** He adds a terrible threatening to disobedient children (v. 17), for warning to the first of those four wicked generations, that curse their parents (v. 11), and shows here,

**1.** Who they are that belong to that generation, not only those that curse their parents in heat and passion, but,

**(1.)** Those that *mock* at them, though it be but with a scornful eye, looking with disdain upon them because of their bodily infirmities, or looking sour or dogged at them when they instruct or command, impatient at their checks and angry at them. God takes notice with what eye children look upon their parents, and will reckon for the leering look and the casts of the evil eye as well as for the bad language given them.

**(2.)** Those that *despise to obey* them, that think it a thing below them to be dutiful to their parents, especially to the *mother*, they scorn to be controlled by her; and thus she that bore them in sorrow in greater sorrow bears their manners.

2. What their doom will be. Those that dishonour their parents shall be set up as monuments of God's vengeance; they shall be hanged in chains, as it were, for the birds of prey to pick out their eyes, those eyes with which they looked so scornfully on their good parents. The dead bodies of malefactors were not to hang all night, but before night the ravens would have picked out their eyes. If men do not punish undutiful children, God will, and will load those with the greatest infamy that conduct themselves haughtily towards their parents. Many who have come to an ignominious end have owned that the wicked courses that brought them to it began in a contempt of their parents' authority.

## ~~2185~~ PROVERBS 30:18-23

### FOUR THINGS UNSEARCHABLE

Here is,

3 An account of four things that are unsearchable, *too wonderful* to be fully known. And here,

1. The first three are natural things, and are only designed as comparisons for the illustration of the last. We cannot trace,

(1.) *An eagle in the air.* Which way she has flown cannot be discovered either by the footstep or by the scent, as the way of a beast may upon ground; nor can we account for the wonderful swiftness of her flight, how soon she has gone beyond our ken.

(2.) *A serpent upon a rock.* The way of a serpent in the sand we may find by the track, but not of a serpent upon the hard rock; nor can we describe how a serpent will, without feet, in a little time creep to the top of a rock.

(3.) *A ship in the midst of the sea.* The leviathan indeed *makes a path to shine after him, one would think the deep to be hoary* (~~2186~~ Job 41:32), but a ship leaves no mark behind it, and sometimes it is so tossed upon the waves that one would wonder how it lives at sea and gains its point. The kingdom of nature is full of wonders, marvellous things which the God of nature does, *past finding out.*

2. The fourth is a mystery of iniquity, more unaccountable than any of

these; it belongs to the depths of Satan, that deceitfulness and that desperate wickedness of the heart which none can know, <sup><247D></sup>Jeremiah 17:9. It is twofold: —

**(1.)** The cursed arts which a vile adulterer has to debauch a maid, and to persuade her to yield to his wicked and abominable lust. This is what a wanton poet wrote a whole book of, long since, *De arte amandi — On the art of love*. By what pretensions and protestations of love, and all its powerful charms, promises of marriage, assurances of secrecy and reward, is many an unwary virgin brought to sell her virtue, and honour, and peace, and soul, and all to a base traitor; for so all sinful lust is in the kingdom of love. The more artfully the temptation is managed the more watchful and resolute ought every pure heart to be against it.

**(2.)** The cursed arts which a vile adulteress has to conceal her wickedness, especially from her husband, from whom she treacherously departs; so close are her intrigues with her lewd companions, and so craftily disguised, that it is as impossible to discover her as to track an *eagle in the air*. She eats the forbidden fruit, after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and then *wipes her mouth*, that it may not betray itself, and with a bold and impudent face says, *I have done no wickedness*.

**[1.]** To the world she denies the fact, and is ready to swear it that she is as chaste and modest as any woman, and never did the wickedness she is suspected of. Those are the works of darkness which are industriously kept from coming to the light.

**[2.]** To her own conscience (if she have any left) she denies the fault, and will not own that that *great wickedness* is any wickedness at all, but an innocent entertainment. See <sup><307E></sup>Hosea 12:7, 8. Thus multitudes ruin their souls by calling evil good and out-facing their convictions with a self-justification.

**II.** An account of four things that are intolerable, that is, four sorts of persons that are very troublesome to the places where they live and the relations and companies they are in; the earth is *disquieted for them*, and groans under them as a burden it cannot bear, and they are all much alike:

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**1.** A *servant* when he is advanced, and entrusted with power, who is, of all others, most insolent and imperious; witness Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, <sup><402D></sup>Nehemiah 2:10.

2. A *fool*, a silly, rude, boisterous, vicious man, who when he has grown rich, and is partaking of the pleasures of the table, will disturb all the company with his extravagant talk and the affronts he will put upon those about him.

3. An ill-natured, cross-grained, *woman*, when she gets a husband, one who, having made herself odious by her pride and sourness, so that one would not have thought any body would ever love her, yet, if at last she be married, that honourable estate makes her more intolerably scornful and spiteful than ever. It is a pity that that which should sweeten the disposition should have a contrary effect. A gracious woman, when she is married, will be yet more obliging.

4. An old maid-servant that has prevailed with her mistress, by humouring her, and, as we say, getting the length of her foot, to leave her what she has, or is as dear to her as if she was to be her heir, such a one likewise will be intolerably proud and malicious, and think all too little that her mistress gives her, and herself wronged if any thing be left from her. Let those therefore whom Providence has advanced to honour from mean beginnings carefully watch against that sin which will most easily beset them, pride and haughtiness, which will in them, of all others, be most insufferable and inexcusable; and let them humble themselves with the remembrance of the rock out of which they were hewn.

## ~~1128~~ PROVERBS 30:24-28

### FOUR THINGS LITTLE AND WISE

I. Agur, having specified four things that seem great and yet are really contemptible, here specifies four things that are little and yet are very admirable, great in miniature, in which, as bishop Patrick observes, he teaches us several good lessons; as,

1. Not to admire bodily bulk, or beauty, or strength, nor to value persons or think the better of them for such advantages, but to judge of men by their wisdom and conduct, their industry and application to business, which are characters that deserve respect.

2. To admire the wisdom and power of the Creator in the smallest and most despicable animals, in an ant as much as in an elephant.
3. To blame ourselves who do not act so much for our own true interest as the meanest creatures do for theirs.
4. Not to despise the weak things of the world; there are those that are *little upon the earth*, poor in the world and of small account, and yet *are exceedingly wise*, wise for their souls and another world, and those *are exceedingly wise, wiser than their neighbours*. Margin, *They are wise, made wise* by the special instinct of nature. All that are wise to salvation are made wise by the grace of God.

## II. Those he specifies are,

1. The *ants*, minute animals and very weak, and yet they are very industrious in gathering proper food, and have a strange sagacity to do it in the summer, the proper time. This is so great a piece of wisdom that we may learn of them to be wise for futurity, <sup>206</sup>Proverbs 6:6. When the ravening *lions lack, and suffer hunger*, the laborious ants have plenty, and know no want.
2. The *conies*, or, as some rather understand it, the Arabian mice, field mice, weak creatures, and very timorous, yet they have so much wisdom as to *make their houses in the rocks*, where they are well guarded, and their feebleness makes them take shelter in those natural fastnesses and fortifications. Sense of our own indigence and weakness should drive us to him that is a *rock higher than we* for shelter and support; there let us make our habitation.
3. The *locusts*; they are little also, and *have no king*, as the bees have, but *they go forth all of them by bands*, like an army in battle-array; and, observing such good order among themselves, it is not any inconvenience to them that they *have no king*. They are called God's *great army* (<sup>205</sup>Joel 2:25); for, when he pleases, he musters, he marshals them, and wages war by them, as he did upon Egypt. *They go forth all of them gathered together* (so the margin); sense of weakness should engage us to keep together, that we may strengthen the hands of one another.
4. The *spider*, an insect, but as great an instance of industry in our houses as the ants are in the field. Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their webs with a fineness and exactness such as no art can pretend to come

near: They *take hold with their hands*, and spin a fine thread out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art; and they are not only in poor men's cottages, but in *kings' palaces*, notwithstanding all the care that is there taken to destroy them. Providence wonderfully keeps up those kinds of creatures, not only which men provide not for, but which every man's hand is against and seeks the destruction of. Those that will mind their business, and *take hold of it with their hands*, shall be *in kings' palaces*; sooner or later, they will get preferment, and may go on with it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements they meet with. If one well-spun web be swept away, it is but making another.

## ~~THE~~ PROVERBS 30:29-33

### FOUR THINGS MAJESTIC AND STATELY

Here is,

**I.** An enumeration of four things which are majestic and stately in their going, which look great: —

**1.** A *lion*, the king of beasts, because *strongest among beasts*. Among beasts it is strength that gives the pre-eminence, but it is a pity that it should do so among men, whose *wisdom* is their honour, not their *strength and force*. The lion *turns not away*, nor alters his pace, for fear of any pursuers, since he knows he is too hard for them. Herein *the righteous are bold as a lion*, that they *turn not away* from their duty for fear of any difficulty they meet with in it.

**2.** A *greyhound* that is girt in the loins and fit for running; or (as the margin reads it) *a horse*, which ought not to be omitted among the creatures that *are comely in going*, for so he is, especially when he is dressed up in his harness or trappings.

**3.** A *he-goat*, the comeliness of whose going is when he goes first and leads the flock. It is the comeliness of a Christian's going to go first in a good work and to lead others in the right way.

**4.** A *king*, who, when he appears in his majesty, is looked upon with reverence and awe, and all agree that *there is no rising up against* him; none can vie with him, none can contend with him, whoever does it, it is

at his peril. And, if *there is no rising up* against an earthly prince, *woe to him then that strives with his Maker*. It is intended that we should learn courage and fortitude in all virtuous actions from the *lion* and *not to turn away for any difficulty* we meet with; from the *greyhound* we may learn quickness and despatch, from the *he-goat* the care of our family and those under our charge, and from *a king* to have our children in subjection with all gravity, and from them all to *go well*, and to order the steps of our conversation so as that we may not only be safe, but *comely, in going*.

**II.** A caution to us to keep our temper at all times and under all provocations, and to take heed of carrying our resentments too far upon any occasion, especially when there is *a king* in the case, *against whom there is no rising up*, when it is a ruler, or one much our superior, that is offended; nay, the rule is always the same.

**1.** We must bridle and suppress our own passion, and take shame to ourselves, whenever we are justly charged with a fault, and not insist upon our own innocence: If we have *lifted up ourselves*, either in a proud conceit of ourselves or a peevish opposition to those that are over us, if we have transgressed the laws of our place and station, we have therein *done foolishly*. Those that magnify themselves over others or against others, that are haughty and insolent, do but shame themselves and betray their own weakness. Nay, if we have but *thought evil*, if we are conscious to ourselves that we have harboured an ill design in our minds, or it has been suggested to us, we must *lay our hand upon our mouth*, that is,

**(1.)** We must humble ourselves for what we have done amiss, and even lie in the dust before God, in sorrow for it, as Job did, when he repented of what he had said foolishly (~~Job~~ Job 40:4, *I will lay my hand upon my mouth*), and as the convicted leper, who *put a covering upon his upper lip*. If we have *done foolishly*, we must not stand to it before men, but by silence own our guilt, which will be the best way of appeasing those we have offended.

**(2.)** We must keep the evil thought we have conceived in our minds from breaking out in any evil speeches. Do not give the evil thought an *imprimatur* — *a license*; allow it not to be published; but *lay thy hand upon thy mouth*; use a holy violence with thyself, if need be, and enjoin thyself silence; as Christ *suffered not the evil spirits to speak*. It is bad to

think ill, but it is much worse to speak it, for that implies a consent to the evil thought and a willingness to infect others with it.

**(3.)** We must not irritate the passions of others. Some are so very provoking in their words and conduct that they even *force wrath*, they make those about them angry whether they will or no, and put those into a passion who are not only not inclined to it, but resolved against it. Now this *forcing of wrath brings forth strife*, and where that *is there is confusion and every evil work*. As the violent agitation of the cream fetches all the good out of the milk, and the hard *wringing of the nose* will extort blood from it, so this *forcing of wrath* wastes both the body and spirits of a man, and robs him of all the good that is in him. Or, as it is in *the churning of milk and the wringing of the nose, that is done by force* which otherwise would not be done, so the spirit is heated by degrees with strong passions; one angry word begets another, and that a third; one passionate debate makes work for another, and so it goes on till it ends at length in irreconcilable feuds. Let nothing therefore be said or done with violence, but every thing with softness and calmness.