

23. "It is as sport to a fool to do mischief but a man of understanding bath wisdom." A senseless sinner makes a jest of the most horrid impieties that can be committed by himself, or others: but a man that weighs things wisely considers that this is no laughing matter; and takes that pleasure in doing well, which fools take in mischievous wickedness.

24. "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted." Yet there is none so wicked but he is sometime afraid; and since this will not amend him, he shall feel what he fears: but this is the comfort of righteous men, who have reason to hope, that they shall at length obtain their desires.

25. "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation." Though the wicked, like a whirlwind, may bluster terribly, and overthrow all that stands in his way, yet he quickly vanishes, and destroys himself by his own violence: but the righteous, as he is fix and settled in his virtue, which is peaceable and quiet and makes no disturbance; so he enjoys the solid fruits of it in a durable and immovable felicity.

26. "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him." Vinegar is not more offensive to the teeth, nor smoke more vexatious to the eyes, than a remiss and negligent minister is to him that employs him, and relies upon him in a weighty business.

27. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." The best way to prolong life is religiously to observe the laws of God: but wickedness generally (both by its own nature and by God's righteous judgment) brings men to an untimely end.

28. "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish." And what a lamentable case is a wicked man in, when he finds himself unexpectedly undone? for this is another difference between a good man and a bad; that the hope of the former concludes in a joyful possession of what he waits for: but the other, failing of his expectation, ends his days in sadness and sorrow.

29. "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity." Whence it follows also that a faithful observance of the rules of virtue, which the Lord hath prescribed us, inspires the upright man with great courage and undaunted resolution, when any evil threatens him: but the workers of iniquity, being weak and feeble spirited, are terribly shaken, nay broken, with the fear of that destruction which is coming on them.

30. "The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth." There is no way like piety, justice, and mercy, to establish a family in perpetual prosperity: but the wicked (how successful soever they may be for a time) shall not be able to settle themselves and their posterity, in the good land, which God hath given us.

31. "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out." The very discourse of a righteous man is so profitable to instruct others in wisdom, and goodness, that it shall be a means to perpetuate him, like a fruitful tree, in a flourishing condition: but he that uses his tongue perversely, to abuse or raise dissensions among his neighbors, shall be cut down, like a tree that cambers [cumbers] the ground.

32. "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness," The righteous knows very well, how to speak those things (and accustoms his mouth unto them) which are grateful to men, and yet not displeasing to Almighty God: but the wicked are odious to both; because they are skilled altogether in lying and flattery, fraud and calumny, and such like subtle, but detestable arts of doing mischief.

If we look to Him, all is simple; we see our way clearly, and we have motives that do not leave the soul a prey to uncertainty. It is the double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways.

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