

Adam Clarke Commentary Proverbs 16

The Lord hath made all things for himself - He has so framed and executed every part of his creation, that it manifests his wisdom, power, goodness, and truth.

Even the wicked for the day of evil - *וְעַל הַיָּמִים הַרְשָׁעִים יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל* (vegam rasha leyom raah). The whole verse is translated by the Chaldee thus: "All the works of the Lord are for those who obey him; and the wicked is reserved for the evil day." As *יִשְׂרָאֵל* (raah) literally signifies to feed, it has been conjectured that the clause might be read, yea, even the wicked he feeds by the day, or daily.

If we take the words as they stand in our present version, they mean no more than what is expressed by the Chaldee and Spriac: and as far as we can learn from their present confused state, by the Septuagint and Arabic, that "the wicked are reserved for the day of punishment." Coverdale has given, as he generally does, a good sense: "The Lorde dotll all thinges for his owne sake; yea, and when he kepeth the ungodly for the daye of wrath." He does not make the wicked or ungodly man; but when man has made himself such, even then God bears with him. But if he repent not, when the measure of his iniquity is filled up, he shall fall under the wrath of God his Maker.

Verse 5

Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished - The day of wrath shall come on the wicked, whatever means he may take to avoid it. See Proverbs 11:21.

Verse 6

By mercy and truth iniquity is purged - This may be misunderstood, as if a man, by showing mercy and acting according to truth, could atone for his own iniquity. The Hebrew text is not ambiguous: *בְּרַחֲמֵי יְהוָה וּבְאֵמֶת יִסְכַּח אִשָּׁתוֹ* (bechesed veemeth yechapper avon); "By mercy and truth he shall atone for iniquity." He - God, by his mercy, in sending his son Jesus into the world, - shall make an atonement for iniquity according to his truth - the word which he declared by his holy prophets since the world began. Or, if we retain the present version, and follow the points in *יְעוּפָר* (yecuppar), reading "iniquity is purged" or "atoned for," the sense is unexceptionable, as we refer the mercy and the truth to God. But what an awful comment is that of Don Calmet, in which he expresses, not only his own opinion, but the staple doctrine of his own Church, the Romish! The reader shall have his own words: "Iniquite se rachete par la misericorde et la verite." On expie ses pechez par des oeuvres de misericorde envers le prochein; par la clemence, par la douceur, par compassion, par les aumones: et par la verite-par la fidelite, la bonne foi, la droiture, requite dans le commerce. Voyez Proverbs 3:3, Proverbs 14:22, Proverbs 20:28. "Iniquity is redeemed by mercy and truth." We expiate our sins by works of mercy towards our neighbor; by clemency, by kindness, by compassion, and by alms: and by truth - by fidelity, by trustworthiness, by uprightness, by equity in commerce. If this be so, why was Jesus incarnated? Why his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion, his death and burial, his resurrection and ascension? Was it only to supply a sufficient portion of merit for those who had neglected to make a fund for themselves? Is the guilt of sin so small in the sight of Divine justice, that a man can atone for it by manifesting good dispositions towards his neighbors, by giving some alms, and not doing those things for which he might be hanged? Why then did God make such a mighty matter of the redemption of the world? Why send his Son at all? An angel would have been more than sufficient; yea, even a sinner who had been converted by his own compassion, alms-deeds, etc., would have been sufficient. And is not this the very doctrine of this most awfully fallen and corrupt Church? Has she not provided a fund of merit in her saints, of what was more than requisite for themselves that it might be given, or sold out, to those who had not enough of their own? Now such is the doctrine of the Romish Church - grossly absurd, and destructively iniquitous! And because men cannot believe this, cannot believe these monstrosities, that Church will burn them to ashes. Ruthless Church! degenerated, fallen, corrupt, and corrupting! once a praise now a curse, in the earth. Thank the blessed God, whose blood alone can expiate sin, that he has a Church upon the earth; and that the Romish is not the Catholic Church; and that it has not that political power by which it would subdue all things to itself.

Verse 7

When a man's ways please the Lord - God is the guardian and defense of all that fear and love him; and it is truly astonishing to see how wondrously God works in their behalf, raising them up friends, and turning their enemies into friends.

Verse 9

A man's heart deviseth his way - This is precisely the same sentiment as that contained in the first verse, on the true meaning of which so much has been already said.

Verse 10

A divine sentence - *כֶּסֶם* (kesem), "divination," as the margin has it. Is the meaning as follows? Though

Verse 30

He shutteth his eyes to devise, etc. - He meditates deeply upon ways and means to commit sin. He shuts his eyes that he may shut out all other ideas, that his whole soul may be in this.

Verse 31

The hoary head is a crown of glory - The latter part of the verse is very well added, for many a sinner has a hoary head.

Verse 32

He that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city - It is much easier to subdue an enemy without than one within. There have been many kings who had conquered nations, and yet were slaves to their own passions. Alexander, who conquered the world, was a slave to intemperate anger, and in a fit of it slew Clytus, the best and most intimate of all his friends, and one whom he loved beyond all others.

The spirit of this maxim is so self-evident, that most nations have formed similar proverbs. The classical reader will remember the following in Hor., Odar. lib. ii., Od. 2: -

Latius regnes, avidum domando

Spiritum, quam si Libyam remotis

Gadibus jungas, et uterque Poenus

Serviat uni.

By virtue's precepts to control

The furious passions of the soul,

Is over wider realms to reign,

Unenvied monarch, than if Spain/You could to distant Libya join,

And both the Carthages were thine.

Francis.

And the following from Ovid is not less striking: -

Fortior est qui se, quam qui fortissima vincit

Moenia, nec virtus altius ire potest.

He is more of a hero who has conquered himself, than he who has taken the best fortified city.

Beyond this self-conquest the highest courage can not extend; nor did their philosophy teach any thing more sublime.

Verse 33

The lot is cast into the lap - On the lot, see the note on Numbers 26:55. How far it may be proper now to put difficult matters to the lot, after earnest prayer and supplication, I cannot say. Formerly, it was both lawful and efficient; for after it was solemnly cast, the decision was taken as coming immediately from the Lord. It is still practiced, and its use is allowed even by writers on civil law. But those who need most to have recourse to the lot are those who have not piety to pray nor faith to trust to God for a positive decision. The lot should never be resorted to in indifferent matters; they should be those of the greatest importance, in which it appears impossible for human prudence or foresight to determine. In such cases the lot is an appeal to God, and he disposes of it according to his goodness, mercy, and truth. The result, therefore, cannot be fortuitous.