

there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness."

II. The fact being thus certain, that a righteous course of life may be attended with temporal evil, where a wicked course of life would secure temporal advantage, the Preacher proceeds to observe that this fact is often made a motive for not being very strict or precise. Verse 16,—*"Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise; for why shouldst thou destroy thyself?"*

I daresay some of you may have heard these words quoted at times, as if they were condemnatory of earnestness in religion. It has been said, "Scripture itself directs us not to be righteous over-much; therefore one should not be too frequent in religious duties, or make pretensions to too great holiness." But you will perceive from the connection that the words in question, though occurring in Scripture, express not the mind of the Spirit of inspiration, but the sentiments of an ungodly man who is introduced as founding an argument against what he considers excessive precision, on the fact that such precision will deprive you of certain temporal advantages which you might gain, if you could only denude yourselves of it.

To illustrate the statement considered in this its true aspect, I shall suppose the case of a young man religiously brought up, who quits the parental roof, and goes out into the world, where he is left entirely to himself; perhaps goes, as not a few before me have done, to a distant country, where no one is near to exercise supervision over him, or to aid him with friendly and pious counsel. Thus cast upon the ocean of life, he meets with many whose influence, more or less directly exerted, is of a kind fitted to lead him astray. But the principles instilled into his mind at a mother's knee, or from the lips of a beloved father, do not at once lose their force. He cannot