

for the soul, to gad about, visiting, and calling, and talking, and hearing sermons, and attending committees, when her presence and active superintendence are wanted at home, and imperative domestic claims and duties are neglected. Wives must make their families their first care; and if, by regularity and diligence in the discharge of their respective trusts at home, they can redeem time for the more private or more public calls of general benevolence, or for hearing a sermon, or attending a meeting, or enjoying the benefit of a little Christian society, it is well. When the two are thus made compatible, "her own works will praise her in the gates." But if, by attending to other calls, her husband is left comfortless, and the food and clothing and education of her children are neglected,—she may be "building" elsewhere, but not where she should be; she is "the foolish" woman whose hands "pull down" her own house,—and who is, in the world, a discredit to the religion she professes, and in the church a stumbling block to fellow-professors.

Verse 2. "He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him."

The pronoun "*him*," in the second clause, is capable of two references. It may refer either to the "upright who feareth the Lord;" or, as is more probable, to *the Lord*; in which case there will be a marked antithesis between the character of the man who *feareth* the Lord, and that of the man who *despiseth* Him. In the first part of the verse, then, we have again the only true, satisfactory evidence of "the fear of the Lord"—of genuine religious principle. It lies not in words or professions, but in *conduct*. That man alone fears the Lord, who "*walketh in his uprightness*." "This," says the apostle John, "is the love of God, that we keep *His commandments*." This is equally the *fear* of God. Hear you a man making great professions; wondrously devout; his prayers many and long; his psalm-singing loud; his attitudes and looks and gestures the perfection of acted sanctity? *Test* him. Mark his conduct. See what he is in the family and in the market,—*is all right there?* If not, note that man; he is a man of words; his religion is the religion of words; his fear toward God is taught only by the principles of interest and expediency, or by that of compromise; of words for God and actions for himself;—which is the same thing as a compromise, to honour God *verbally* for liberty to *dishonour* him *practically*. Let it be laid down as a settled principle, that whatever be a man's professions of reverence and devotion, "he who is perverse in his ways despiseth God." *Disobedience* is the sure proof of contempt. You judge of the professions of children to parents not by what they *say*, but what they *do*. Thus judge of men's religion. Ask not how frequent, how long, how loud, or how austere and rigid his devotions are;—ask what his *practice* is. There have been men who in the sanctuary have seemed the very patterns of all that is devout (only that in general it is *overdone*), whom, when you follow them into the world, you find in the meanest of its mean and the dirtiest of its dirty doings. This is not to "fear," but emphatically to "despise the Lord." It is the greatest of all the affronts that can be put upon Him—the grossest of insults, the most injurious of wrongs. The child dishonours his father more who speaks fair to his face and rebels behind his back, mocking at the very success of his fair speeches, than if he were openly and consistently hostile and regardless. And so does he dishonour God more who says to Him, "Lord, Lord, but does not the things which He says," than if he made no profession at all. He adds *hypocrisy* to *rebellion*. Actual "perverseness," or disobedience, is contempt of God's *authority*; contempt of God's *glory*; contempt of God's *threatenings*; and contempt of God's *promises*. It shows a scornful disregard of *all*. They who despise God's WILL despise GOD HIMSELF.

Verse 3. "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them."

"*Pride*" may be regarded as one of the attributes of folly. It was the original folly of man; the principle which Satan succeeded in introducing, and by which he seduced man from God. And it has been, in reference to God, his folly ever