

### Adam Clarke:

**Man prepares, but God governs. God has made all things for himself; he hates pride. The judgments of God. The administration of kings; their justice, anger, and clemency. God has made all in weight, measure, and due proportion. Necessity produces industry. The patient man. The lot is under the direction of the Lord.**

### Verse 1

The preparations of the heart in man - The Hebrew is מַעֲשֵׂי לֵב (leadam maarchey leb), which is, literally, "To man are the dispositions of the heart; but from the Lord is the answer of the tongue." Man proposes his wishes; but God answers as he thinks proper. The former is the free offspring of the heart of man; the latter, the free volition of God. Man may think as he pleases, and ask as he lists; but God will give, or not give, as he thinks proper. This I believe to be the meaning of this shamefully tortured passage, so often vexed by critics, their doubts, and indecisions. God help them! for they seldom have the faculty of making any subject plainer! The text does not say that the "preparations," rather dispositions or arrangements, מַחְשָׁבוֹת (maarchey) of the heart, as well as the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord; though it is generally understood so; but it states that the dispositions or schemes of the heart (are) man's; but the answer of the tongue (is) the Lord's. And so the principal versions have understood it.

**Hominis est animam preparare; et Domini gubernare linguam - Vulgate. "œlt is the part of man to prepare his soul: it is the prerogative of the Lord to govern the tongue."**

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 delibba(umin yeya mamlala delishana) - Chaldee. âœFrom the son of man is the counsel of the heart; and from  
 the Lord is the word of the tongue.âœ

[illegible]

The Arabic takes great latitude: "All the works of an humble man are clean before the Lord; and the wicked shall perish in an evil day." Of a man fit to maken redy the inwitt: and of the Lorde to governe the tunge. - Old MS. Bible.

â€œA man maye well purpose a thinge in his harte: but the answere of the tonge cometh of the Lorde. - Coverdale.

Matthewâ€™s Bible, 1549, and Becketâ€™s Bible of the same date, and Cardmardenâ€™s of 1566, follow Coverdale. The Bible printed by R. Barker, at Cambridge, 4th., 1615, commonly called the Breeches Bible, reads the text thus: - â€œThe preparations of the hart are in man; but the answere of the tongue is of the Lord.â€• So that it appears that our first, and all our ancient versions, understood the text in the same way; and this, independently of critical torture, is the genuine meaning of the Hebrew text. That very valuable version published in Italian, at Geneva, fol. 1562, translates thus: *Le dispositioni del cuore sono de lâ€™huomo, ma la risposta del la lingua e dal Signore.* â€œThe dispositions of the heart are of man; but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.â€•

The modern European versions, as far as I have seen, are the same. And when the word dispositions, arrangements, schemes, is understood to be the proper meaning of the Hebrew term, as shown above, the sense is perfectly sound; for there may be a thousand schemes and arrangements made in the heart of man which he may earnestly wish God to bring to full effect, that are neither for his good nor God's glory; and therefore it is his interest that God has the answer in his own power. At the same time, there is no intimation here that man can prepare his own heart to wait upon, or pray unto the Lord; or that from the human heart any thing good can come, without Divine influence; but simply that he may have many schemes and projects which he may beg God to accomplish, that are not of God, but from himself. Hence our own proverb: "Man proposes, but God disposes." I have entered the more particularly into the consideration of this text, because some are very strenuous in the support of our vicious reading, from a supposition that the other defends the heterodox opinion of man's sufficiency to think any thing as of himself. But while they deserve due credit for their orthodox caution, they will see that no such imputation can fairly lie against the plain grammatical translation of the Hebrew text.

### Verse 3

**Commit thy works unto the Lord - See that what thou doest is commanded; and then begin, continue, and end all in his name. And thy thoughts shall be established - these schemes or arrangements, though formed in the heart, are agreeable to the Divine will, and therefore shall be established. His thoughts - his meditations - are right; and he begins and ends his work in the Lord; and therefore all issues well.**

### Verse 4



divination were applied to a righteous king's lips, to induce him to punish the innocent and spare the guilty, yet would not his lips transgress in judgment; so firmly attached is he to God, and so much is he under the Divine care and influence. Whatever judgment such a one pronounces, it may be considered as a decision from God.

#### Verse 11

All the weights of the bag are his - Alluding, probably, to the standard weights laid up in a bag in the sanctuary, and to which all weights in common use in the land were to be referred, in order to ascertain whether they were just: but some think the allusion is to the weights carried about by merchants in their girdles, by which they weigh the money, silver and gold, that they take in exchange for their merchandise. As the Chinese take no coin but gold and silver by weight, they carry about with them a sort of small steelyard, by which they weigh those metals taken in exchange.

#### Verse 12

It is an abomination to kings, etc. - In all these verses the wise man refers to monarchical government rightly administered. And the proverbs on this subject are all plain.

#### Verse 16

How much better - to get wisdom than gold? - Who believes this, though spoken by the wisest of men, under Divine inspiration?

#### Verse 17

The highway of the upright - The upright man is ever departing from evil; this is his common road: and by keeping on in this way, his soul is preserved.

#### Verse 18

Pride goeth before destruction - Here pride is personified: it walks along, and has destruction in its train.

And a haughty spirit before a fall - Another personification. A haughty spirit marches on, and ruin comes after. In this verse we find the following Masoretic note in most Hebrew Bibles. **אֶחָד מִן הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הַזֵּה** (chatsi hassepher): **the middle of the book.** This verse is the middle verse; and the first clause makes the middle of the words of the book of Proverbs.

#### Verse 22

Understanding is a well-spring of life - **מְקוֹר חַיִּים** (mekor chaim); another allusion to the artery that carries the blood from the heart to distribute it to all the extremities of the body.

#### Verse 23

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth - He has a wise heart; he speaks as it dictates; and therefore his speeches are all speeches of wisdom.

#### Verse 24

Pleasant words are as a honey-comb - The honey of which is sweeter than that which has been expressed from it, and has a much finer flavour before it has come in contact with the atmospheric air.

#### Verse 25

There is a way that seemeth right - This whole verse is precisely the same as that Proverbs 14:12.

#### Verse 26

He that laboreth - No thanks to a man for his labor and industry; if he do not work he must starve.

#### Verse 27

An ungodly man diggeth up evil - How will the following suit?

Effodiuntur opes irritamenta malorum

**Wealth, the incitement to all evil, is dug up out the earth.**

A wicked man labors as much to bring about an evil purpose, as the quarryman does to dig up stones.

In his lips - a burning fire - His words are as inflammable, in producing strife and contention among his neighbors, as fire is in igniting dry stubble.

#### 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.