

The Sayings Of Solomon

PEARLS FROM THE PROVERBS

The 2003

POWER



Lectures

Hosted by the Southaven church of Christ
Southaven, Mississippi

B. J. Clarke

Lectureship Director

Copyright © 2003
ISBN 1-930999-11-9

Southaven church of Christ
POWER Publications

Dedication

As we journey through life we meet thousands of people. Some we meet in passing and never see again. With others we become friends for awhile, and then go our separate ways. But then there are those people who come into our lives, and they find a treasured place in our hearts forever. They touch our lives in such a significant way, and they make such an indelible impact upon us, that we are never quite the same thereafter.

This year's lectureship book is dedicated to such a couple. The impact for good that this couple has made upon the local church at Southaven is inestimable. Their fingerprints can be found all over the various works of the Southaven church of Christ. Their footprints can still be seen in the hallways of hospitals all over the Memphis area, the homes of the physically sick, and the homes of wayward brothers and sisters in Christ.

This couple did not just go the extra mile; they went a few more miles just for good measure. I do not hesitate to say that in the twelve years with which I have been associated with the Southaven church of Christ, no one has done more work for the Lord, no one has been more caring, no one has been more encouraging, no one has done more to assist with this lectureship, than this precious couple.

If you've been here during previous lectureships then you've seen her sitting at the registration table, greeting our visitors with a genuine and enthusiastic smile. You've seen him running back and forth, doing whatever needed to be done at the moment. And then there are all those things they did that you never saw: helping out with the book, making name tags for the speakers, helping to design the brochure, keeping track of how many visitors we had from how many different congregations, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera!

This year's lectureship is an emotional time for us here at Southaven because this is the first POWER lectureship we will experience without the two of them working together, side by side. Some things in life just go together: ice cream and cake, bacon and eggs, sugar and spice, etc. It is hard to conceive of one without the other. We feel the very same way about **Bill and Othella Pierce**.

On March 10th, 2003, our precious sister Othella departed to be with Christ. She faced cancer with grace, dignity and courage. To the very end she was more concerned about others around her than she was about herself. Bill was exemplary in every respect as a Christian husband and caregiver. The years they served together as elder, and elder's wife, will always be remembered as some of the finest years at the Southaven church of Christ.

Bill meets the description of the righteous man in Proverbs. As for Othella, you will not see her physically this week, but if you attend/read the lecture on the Virtuous Woman (Prov. 31:10-31), you will hear about her. She was indeed a worthy woman! Because of these things, and much more that could be said, we affectionately dedicate the 2003 POWER Lectureship book to **Bill and Othella Pierce**.



Bill and Othella Pierce

Acknowledgments

It is not an exaggeration to say that the words of this book will be read in the future by thousands of people in thousands of places. If you are one of those readers, then you need to know who is responsible for making the information you hold in your hands available.

In the first place, the elders of the Southaven church of Christ are responsible for this book. If they did not approve of and promote this lectureship, then this book would not exist in its present form. These men, Larry Everson and Con Lambert, love the Truth, and they love the Lord Who gave it. They desire that this Truth be spread across the globe.

In the second place, the speakers who authored the material in this book deserve commendation. It will take you much less time to read their chapters than it did for them to write them. They did not sacrifice their time and effort for the purpose of self-glorification. They wrote for your edification, and their own. The very fact that you are reading these words is a comfort and encouragement to them that the time they spent researching and writing was worth it all.

In the third place, you need to know that this book exists because of the volunteer spirit of numerous brethren at the Southaven church of Christ. Chief among them is Robin Smith. This is the fifth year that Robin has worked with me on the book. He began as a teenager, and is now a law student at Vanderbilt University. He did all of the initial typesetting and formatting for the book, and he did it well, as usual. Every lectureship director should be as fortunate to have a right-hand man like Robin available to them.

My wife Tish deserves a gold star for graciously logging hour after hour on the computer to finalize the typesetting and formatting of the book. I assure you that

there are not enough pages available in this book to describe how much I love and appreciate her for all that she does and has done to support me in my work as a Gospel preacher. Every preacher should be so fortunate to have such a supportive “preacher’s wife.”

Great appreciation is also expressed to Lynn and Rise Cooley, Al and Cheryl McClurg, Clarence Sparks, Lynda Smith, Sheryl Gentry, Maggie Depoyster, Duane McCrory, Mary Baldwin, Lee Hogan, Coleman Simpson and Chris Tice, all of whom volunteered their time to “Scripture-check” the manuscripts to make sure that the Scripture citations in the book are accurate. Thanks to Francis Fairley for keeping the computers ready for action, and for his creative ideas about how to improve our electronic editions of our books.

A final word of thanks is due to our three secretaries: Geraldine Chaney (who worked much on the electronic editions of the books), and Pam Eaton and Betty Marshall, who keep things running smoothly around the office so that we can work on the book.

Foreword

Solomon declared that “of making many books there is no end” (Eccl. 12:12). With the advent of the Internet it can also be said that “of making many websites there is no end.” Information (or misinformation) is everywhere around us. Walk into *Barnes and Noble*, *Waldenbooks*, or your local library and you will see books by the thousands. Get on the web, type in the word “books” in the search field, and get ready for thousands upon thousands of “hits.”

With so many books available, and so little time, **why should you take the time to read this particular volume?** There are several reasons why this book should demand your attention. The number one reason you should investigate this volume is because **it explores one of the greatest books ever written.** Sixty-six books make up the canon of Holy Scripture, and all of them are equally precious because they were all produced by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). However, let’s face it---some of these books have become “our favorites.” For many years now, the book of Proverbs has been one of my very favorite books of Scripture to read. I know that I am not alone in this feeling.

Why is the Book of Proverbs so extraordinarily popular? Its contents are so practical and applicable to our everyday lives. It “gets down to where we live.” Do you want (or need) to be a better husband or wife? Proverbs will tell you how to accomplish this goal. Are you seeking advice on how to raise your children? That advice is as close as the nearest copy of the book of Proverbs. Are you a young person needing direction for your future? Do you need to watch your tongue more carefully? Are you having trouble with your temper? Are you tempted by wine and alcohol? Do you need a financial advisor? Are you looking for a good medicine for what ails you? The book of Proverbs addresses all of these issues, and more!

One thing that makes the book of Proverbs so amazing is its freshness and relevance. The book is ancient; its contents are perpetually relevant. This lectureship book is designed to take the wisdom of the book of Proverbs and to explain it and apply it to our modern circumstances.

The first chapter of this book provides an exhaustive introduction to wisdom literature, as well as an exposition of Proverbs 1:1-7. Chapters 2-4 offer an overview of the themes of wisdom, the fear of the Lord, and receiving instruction versus refusing reproof, as revealed in the book of Proverbs. After the introductory chapters, the book explores the following main areas as they are discussed in the book of Proverbs.

Part One	Man's Relationship To His Fellow Man
Part Two	Man's Relationship To His Family
Part Three	Proverbs Of Contrast
Part Four	Special Studies In Proverbs
Part Five	The Conclusion Of The Matter
Part Six	Women's Lectures
Part Seven	Indexes

I believe that one of the positive features of this book is that it deals with the entire book of Proverbs in a topical fashion. In preparation for this lectureship, I took every verse from the book of Proverbs and matched it with a topical category. After collating these verses into numerous categories, I then sent them to the speakers and asked them to organize their assigned verses into one lecture/chapter. Therefore, instead of having to go through the book of Proverbs to look for the scattered references to a particular subject, you can find them tied together in this book. In the back of this book you will find a topical arrangement of the entire book of Proverbs, which I compiled at the beginning of this project.

Of course, our one and only aim in sending forth this volume is to assist one and all in heeding the command of Solomon to "get wisdom" (Prov. 4:5).

--B. J. Clarke

Table Of Contents

Introductory Chapters

Chapter 1

Introduction To Wisdom Literature

Ted J. Clarke.....15

Chapter 2

Wisdom In Proverbs

B. J. Clarke.....82

Chapter 3

The Fear Of The Lord

Curtis Cates.....99

Chapter 4

Receiving Instruction vs. Refusing Reproof

Billy Bland.....117

Man's Relationship To His Fellow Man

Chapter 5

How To Treat Our Fellow Man

Sam Willcut.....132

Chapter 6

How Not To Treat Our Fellow Man

Scott Lambert.....146

Chapter 7

How To Treat Our Friends And Enemies

Paul Sain.....159

A Man's Relationship To His Family

Chapter 8

Husband/Wife Relationship

Keith Mosher.....178

Chapter 9

Proverbs For Parents

David Brown.....196

Chapter 10

Proverbs For Youth: "Listen To Your Parents"

Ronnie Hayes.....222

Chapter 11

Proverbs For Youth: "Watch Your Companions"

Cliff Goodwin.....241

Proverbs Of Contrast

Chapter 12

Pride vs. Humility In Proverbs

Bobby Liddell.....262

Chapter 13

Work vs. Laziness In Proverbs

Gary Summers.....280

Chapter 14

The Fool In Proverbs

Kevin Beard.....302

Chapter 15

The Wise Man In Proverbs

Wayne Jones.....319

Chapter 16
The Wicked Man In Proverbs
David Jones.....333

Chapter 17
The Righteous Man In Proverbs
Steve Yeatts.....354

Chapter 18
The Immoral Woman In Proverbs
Allen Webster.....375

Chapter 19
The Tongue In Proverbs-How To Use It
Michael Light.....425

Chapter 20
The Tongue In Proverbs - How Not To Use It
Barry Gilreath, Jr......435

Chapter 21
Anger In Proverbs
Don Walker.....446

Chapter 22
The Merry Heart In Proverbs
Dave Leonard.....461

Special Studies In Proverbs

Chapter 23
Honesty In Proverbs
Paul Meacham, Jr......481

Chapter 24	
Money In Proverbs	
<i>Gary McDade</i>	496
Chapter 25	
Wine In Proverbs	
<i>Michael McDaniel</i>	511
Chapter 26	
Abominations In Proverbs	
<i>Garland Elkins</i>	530
Chapter 27	
The Attributes Of God In Proverbs	
<i>Dub McClish</i>	543
Chapter 28	
Kings/Rulers In Proverbs	
<i>Barry Grider</i>	553
Chapter 29	
Miscellaneous Proverbs	
<i>Dave Watson</i>	568
The Conclusion Of The Matter	
Chapter 30	
The Sayings Of Agur - (Proverbs 30)	
<i>Gary Colley</i>	593
Chapter 31	
Reward vs. Punishment In Proverbs	
<i>Michael Hatcher</i>	601

Chapter 32	
A Greater Than Solomon Is Here	
<i>Robert R. Taylor, Jr.</i>	616

Women's Lectures: The Woman In Proverbs

Chapter 33	
"The Gracious Woman" (Proverbs 11:16)	
<i>Irene Taylor</i>	633

Chapter 34	
"The Woman With The Attire Of An Harlot"	
(Proverbs 7:10)	
<i>Celicia Grider</i>	648

Chapter 35	
"The Foolish Woman" (Proverbs 14:1)	
<i>Tish Clarke</i>	659

Chapter 36	
"The Virtuous Woman" (Proverbs 31:10-31)	
<i>Tish Clarke</i>	675

Subject Index	693
----------------------------	-----

Scripture Index	704
------------------------------	-----

Topical Arrangement Of Proverbs	730
----------------------------------------------	-----

This page left intentionally blank

CHAPTER 1

Introduction To Wisdom Literature

Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

WHAT A JOY IT IS once more to be able to speak on the **POWER** Lectures under the capable direction of B. J. Clarke, whom I am proud to say is my son. About thirteen years ago, B. J. called me to tell me that he had heard that the work at the Southaven church was open. He suggested that I submit a resume. Since I was trying to complete my master's work at Alabama Christian School of Religion, I told him that I thought he was the one to look into the work here. Thirteen years later I am convinced that was one of the best pieces of fatherly wisdom I have ever imparted to him. B. J., Tish, and the children seem to have made an excellent fit here with you all, and I am happy for it. B. J., with the elders and deacons who have served here, the past and present associate ministers, and the members, have progressed the work of the Lord at this church in a most wonderful way. May God bless you all.

This year's theme, "**The Sayings of Solomon: Pearls from the Proverbs,**" is an excellent study. The concept of "wisdom" itself, as well as the Wisdom Literature (hereafter, WL) of the Bible, seems to be generally neglected and often badly misunderstood. This volume will hopefully

generate more study in the area of WL and increase our understanding of God's revelation in the Bible's wisdom books.

Our task in this lesson is: (1) to define the meaning of wisdom as it relates to Scripture, (2) to present a general introduction to the WL of the Bible, and (3) to provide a detailed introduction to the book of Proverbs.

God—The Seat And Giver Of Wisdom

The English dictionary definition of "wisdom" is:

1 a: accumulated philosophic or scientific learning: **knowledge** b: ability to discern inner qualities and relationships: **insight** c: good sense: **judgment** d: generally accepted belief...
2: a wise attitude or course of action 3: the teachings of the ancient wise men.¹

Such a definition is not altogether helpful in discussing God and wisdom, for God has not "accumulated" wisdom; it is an eternal, infinite attribute of God. God's wisdom encompasses His knowledge, insight, and judgment about everything, and is unlimited and perfect: "Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite" (Psm. 147:5).² The apostle Paul wrote:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom. 11:33-36).

Since man is made in the image of an all-wise God (Gen. 1:26-27), He equipped us with the ability to be taught wisdom principles and to grow in our knowledge and

understanding of wisdom. Adam and Eve were created with wisdom and capabilities to increase in wisdom when God placed them in Eden (Gen. 1:28-31). The question God asked Job implies that this ability is part of His creation of man: “Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who hath given understanding to the heart?” (Job 38:36). Furthermore, since the Bible says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and knowledge of the holy [Holy One, ASV] is understanding” (Prov. 9:10), Adam and Eve were equipped with the wisdom to obey God’s commands and prohibitions (Gen. 2:15-25). “He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die” (Prov. 19:16). God would not have given them commandments if they did not have the wisdom potential to keep them.

Eve, then Adam, failed to exercise their “fear of God” wisdom when tempted by the serpent (Gen. 3:1-7), just as we sometimes give into temptation even though we know the wise choice would be to resist it (Jas. 1:13-15). The fruit of the forbidden tree (Gen. 2:16-17) that Eve thought was “desired to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6) did **not** provide what Satan promised. The implication of the Liar’s promise was that Eve would become all-wise concerning good and evil, like God (Gen. 3:5, ASV). What Adam and Eve did receive was an experiential knowledge of good and evil, an understanding of guilt, shame, and the suffering of the penalty attached for this sin (Gen. 3:7-19). The Devil is a deceiver who never tells the whole truth (Rev. 12:9; John 8:44). Adam and Eve acted foolishly against the wisdom God gave to His human creation. Possessing a knowledge of what is wise does not guarantee wise action. Solomon is a classic example of this, though he warns against it. “Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge” (Prov. 19:27, NKJV):

The council [of the Godhead] recognized that man had “become as one of us, to know good and evil.” This statement is not made in irony or ridicule, as some have thought, but in sadness. Man had once known only the goodness of God; but now he had come to know experimentally the evil inherent in rejecting God’s Word, as well as the necessary spiritual and physical suffering resulting from such action, so that he did, indeed, “know good and evil.” His hoped-for “godness,” however, as promised by the Serpent, was indeed a pitiful caricature of what he had anticipated. He had been created in God’s very image, but now that image had been gravely marred and defaced by his experience of evil.³ [Material in brackets [] in block quotes is provided throughout by the author of this lesson—TJC]

The wisdom Adam and Eve sought from eating the forbidden fruit was both illicit and unattainable. God only is wise in the ultimate, unlimited sense (Jude 25; 1 Tim. 1:17). Man possesses wisdom capabilities from God and, as one’s mind develops, can, by observation, experience, prayer (providence), and heeding revelation increase in legitimate wisdom (Prov. 1:5; Prov. 2:6; Prov. 6:6-8).

God our Creator has endowed us with the tools necessary for learning in three areas. First, we have from God the ability to know Him and in wisdom serve Him with fear (reverent awe), although many reject Him (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 9:10; Rom. 1:18-21). Second, God gives us, in the ways mentioned above, the wisdom we need to treat our fellowman in the best possible manner (Prov. 3:1-4; et al.). All of the Proverbs deal with the **way** we should love and serve God and our fellowman. As such the Proverbs are a reflection of the first and second great commandments: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:29-31). In this way the books of WL in the Old Testament (hereafter, OT) are inseparably connected with the Law and the Prophets.

The OT Law revealed God's will as Christ stated it above (cf. Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18), and the Prophets kept calling people back to that Law (Dan. 9:11-15; Mal. 4:4). The WL of Scripture simply gives additional revelation from God for instruction and encouragement as to how to keep God first in one's life, and some very specific and practical instruction of how to conduct one's life in dealing with the good and evil found in others. Third, God has endowed us with the wisdom we need to live in our physical environment (Gen. 1:28-30; Gen. 2:15). This natural realm is also an area where Solomon's famous wisdom excelled (1 Kings 4:33). WL also addresses our need to be good stewards of God's gifts in this area and sometimes uses the order in the natural field to teach us lessons (Prov. 27:23-27; Prov. 30:15-31).

Although man's wisdom has increased through experience, providence, and God's revelation, there is surely a base or body of wisdom, revealed to our original parents and built upon by their experiences, that God intended to be passed from one generation to another throughout the history of men. This is the stated reason for Solomon's giving us the book of Proverbs—to pass onto others the wisdom he had (Prov. 1:1-9; Prov. 2:1-5; et al.). We will discuss this further in dealing with the wisdom literature of the Ancient Near East.

There is a fourth type of wisdom the Bible mentions which is not from God. It is the type Eve followed in Eden. James 3:15 states, "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." This "worldly wisdom" is contrasted with God's wisdom most eloquently by Paul:

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring

to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:18-31).

Worldly wisdom is falsely called **knowledge**; it ignores true **insights** into man's life and needs; and its **judgments** are based on improper reasoning from inadequate information.

God's wisdom greatly excels the wisdom He imparts to us as His creation. His knowledge of all things (material and spiritual) and the way they work or do not work together is beyond our ability to fully know or comprehend:

A further factor, in the light of this knowledge, is the wisdom of God. By this is meant that God acts in the light of all of the facts and in light of correct values. Knowing all things, God knows

what is good.... When we humans act, we sometimes act unwisely simply because we do not have all the facts. Later developments may prove our actions to have been unwise. Had we known certain relevant facts, we would undoubtedly have acted differently....God, however, has access to all information. So his judgments are made wisely. He never has to revise his estimation of something because of additional information. He sees all things in their proper perspective; thus he does not give anything a higher or lower value than what it ought to have. One can therefore pray confidently, knowing that God will not grant something that is not good. Even though we are not wise enough to see all of the facts, or the results to which our ideas or planned actions may lead, we can trust God to know what is best.⁴

God's wisdom flows from His omniscience. He does the right thing every time. He always has and always will. God has given and promises to give sufficient wisdom to His faithful children, according to their needs (Prov. 2:6). Through prayer we have the promise of God's supply of wisdom for our lack of it (Jas. 1:5-6). The WL of the Bible is an abundant source of God's imparted wisdom that will bless those who study it diligently and apply it consistently.

Wisdom Literature (WL) In Scripture

OT scholars generally assign to Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs the classification of WL. Additionally, there are psalms that have characteristics of wisdom themes and style (Psm. 1; Psm. 14; Psm. 53; Psm. 19; Psm. 36-37; Psm. 49-50; Psm. 73; Psm. 82; Psm. 91; Psm. 101; Psm. 112; Psm. 119; Psm. 125; Psm. 127-128; Psm. 133).⁵ Some see far fewer wisdom Psalms. There are 37 references in 42 chapters in Job (KJV) to the wise or wisdom; 125 such references in 31 chapters in Proverbs; 54 references in 12 chapters in Ecclesiastes; and 21 references in 150 Psalms.⁶

One of the major emphases in WL is contrasting the value of wise men and wisdom versus fools and folly (foolishness). This latter group of words is found 9 times in Job; 18 times in Psalms; 97 times in Proverbs; and 32 times in Ecclesiastes.⁷

Wisdom Literature Vocabulary

Several word definitions will assist one in a study of WL:

The word for “wisdom” originally denoted some kind of technical skill, aptitude, or ability like that necessary for crafting wood and metal, artistic design and architecture, sea navigation, and even politics. The most common word for wisdom, *hokmah*, reflected this practical aspect of the term in several different Old Testament contexts. For example, Bezalel and Oholiab were given special “wisdom” in artistic design and craftsmanship for their work in the construction of articles and utensils for the tabernacle (Exod. 31:1-11).⁸

It may be that these people already had certain skills and abilities in their particular areas, whether weavers and tailors selected to make Aaron’s priestly garments (Exod. 28:3), or artisans for working in metal, stone, or wood for the tabernacle (Exod. 31:1-6). However, God gifted them with additional wisdom to perform these tasks specifically as He wanted them.

The Proverbs, particularly, are concerned with wisdom as people skills: learning and doing those things in dealing with one’s own life and interacting with others to make one’s life the best it can be:

In respect to wisdom proper, this same Hebrew word [*hokmah*] has acquired a derived meaning equivalent to “experience” or even “good common sense” (cf. Job 32:7; Prov. 1:7). Essentially the wisdom mentioned in these texts connotes the judicious or skilled application of the powers of

human reason to the issues of life. Other Old Testament wisdom terminology includes a series of related words usually translated in the following manner, “understanding, knowledge” or even “discernment” (Prov. 1:5; Prov. 3:5; Prov. 4:1), “insight, sensibility, intelligent, clever, have success” (Prov. 12:8; Prov. 16:20; Prov. 19:14; Prov. 21:11), and “prudence, success, good results” (Prov. 3:21; Isa. 28:29).⁹

Consider also these brief definitions to the following words that will help you better grasp the teaching of WL.¹⁰

Understanding and discernment—recognizing the options one has in a particular situation and distinguishing between the alternatives of good and evil, right and wrong, true and false. These terms can overlap with wisdom itself.

Knowledge—information gained through receiving teaching, study, or experience. Our body of knowledge is to govern properly our behavior in relationships with God, family, and neighbor. How we act reflects knowledge or lack of it.

Discretion—using caution in what one says or does, often as a result of reflection before speaking or acting.

Prudent—using wisdom to govern and discipline oneself in the affairs of life.

Counsel—instruction received or given regarding a matter after proper deliberation as to the wisest course of action.

Discipline—can be instructive information on how to behave or corrective discipline designed to punish bad behavior, with a view to ensuring proper behavior in the future.

Rebuke—sharp criticism of one’s behavior to expose sin, bring about repentance, or correct improper attitudes or actions.

Fool, folly, foolish—

The Hebrew word, *kesil*, pictures one who is foolish, stupid and inclined to make wrong choices. His decisions move him in a direction that may provide immediate pleasure, but will eventually lead to ruin and destruction. He is mentally dull, morally insensitive, arrogant, disrespectful, deceitful and untrustworthy.¹¹

Simple—

The Hebrew word, *peti*, means “simple” or “naïve.” It describes one who is immature, foolish, naïve, inexperienced, excessively open, and thus easily enticed to do wrong. A simple person lacks the discernment needed to distinguish between right and wrong or wise and foolish behavior. He is often thoughtless and impulsive.¹²

Sluggard—lazy, without ambition to work to satisfy one’s desires or needs or to help others.

Deceitful—those who deliberately falsify or mislead in order to deal dishonestly or treacherously.

Froward—perverse, those who are turned away from what is good and right toward what is crooked, twisted, distorted and deceptive.

Mocker—

The Hebrew words, *lis* and cognates, convey the ideas of mocking, scorning, deriding. They express an attitude of arrogance combined with an open contempt for what is good and righteous. They describe stubborn people who adamantly refuse to change their ways, aggressive free thinkers who scornfully push their ways on others.¹³

Wisdom incorporates knowledge of the positive and negative elements given above and makes the right choices while rejecting the wrong ones:

In the Old Testament, then, wisdom is basically the very practical art of being prudent, sensible and skillfully insightful so that one might prosper and have good success in life. Wisdom is also disciplined and proper behavior, learning how to do what is right and just and fair (Prov. 3:1-5). Wisdom taps the life experience of accumulated years and harnesses that knowledge and understanding for the purpose of safety, long life, right behavior, sound moral character, happiness, material prosperity, and integrity (cf. Prov. 1:33; Prov. 2:8-9; Prov. 3:1-2). Ultimately wisdom is learning how to steer through life in a way that wins favor and a good name in the sight of both humanity and God (Prov. 3:4).¹⁴ [The text of Proverbs 3:4 places “God” before “man,” which is as it should be.]

We will see how this wisdom plays out in one’s life in specific ways when we consider the book of Proverbs itself.

The fear of the Lord (God) is the final phrase we need to consider for now in our vocabulary of wisdom words. The concept is found several times in each of the wisdom books. In Job’s wisdom poem, he said, “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). The great conclusion to Ecclesiastes states, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). Proverbs’ most notable verses claim this as the motto or theme of the whole book:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7).

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Prov. 9:10, ASV).

In the final verses of the book we read, “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30).

What is this “fear of the Lord”?

The aspects of fear encompassed by *yr’ I* [the transliterated Hebrew word for fear in the passages just cited above, in other resources is printed as *yir’ah* -tjc] include terror, respect, and worship. Terror and worship are, in some sense, polar opposites; the former is characteristic of complete anxiety while the latter suggests trust. The aspect of respect, however, can be either a weakened sense of fear or worship. Therefore, the concept of terror can be weakened to express respect, which can once again be intensified to express worship. Only by context can the particular sense of each occurrence be determined.¹⁵

When the apostle John said, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment” (1 John 4:18), he was not denying what these wisdom verses affirm as essential. John was speaking of the knee-knocking or quaking-terror aspect of fear. No one loved the Father more than the Son, and, when Jesus prayed to the Father, He “was heard in that he feared” (Heb. 5:7). There is no incompatibility between a commitment to God out of love and a commitment out of awe and reverence.

This “fear of the Lord” is no “faith-only” concept. Rather, it was to be demonstrated through worship of God and proper moral conduct toward others:

The basic goal of Hebrew wisdom was a proper relationship to Yahweh, the very God of Wisdom (Job 12:13; Isa. 31:1-2). This “Lord who is wise” has revealed his knowledge and understanding in creation, and he continues to display his wisdom in his providential rule of the nations (e.g., Psm. 104:24; Prov. 3:19; Isa. 10:13)... The Old Testament expression “the fear of the Lord” best conveys this relational dimension of Hebrew wisdom (Psm. 111:10; Prov. 1:7). The fear of the Lord was the source of Hebrew wisdom and

actually connoted a complex of interrelated attitudes and actions:

1. The desire to get understanding that arises from a choice grounded in the human will (Prov. 1:29; Prov. 2:5).
2. Awe and reverence for the God of creation and redemption that elicits genuine worship and willing obedience to his commands (Prov. 24:21).
3. Dread at God's holiness and trepidation of his divine judgment (Eccl. 12:13-14).
4. Faith and trust in God's plan for human life, and a rejection of self-reliance (Psm. 115:11; Prov. 3:5-6).
5. Hating and avoiding evil, and refusing to envy sinners (Prov. 3:7; Prov. 9:13; Prov. 16:6; Prov. 23:17).
6. Generally the reward of prosperity and long life to the prudent (Prov. 10:27; Prov. 14:27; Prov. 19:23).
7. Disciplined instruction that instills wisdom, humility, and honor (Prov. 15:33; Prov. 22:4).¹⁶

Thus, "fear of the Lord" is a trusting, faithful obedience that worships God and loves one's neighbor from a reverent, respectful awe of the Almighty.

Types Of Wisdom Literature

WL intends to deal with both hard, puzzling questions (Job, Ecclesiastes) and the practical matters of how to get along in everyday life (Proverbs).

Job knows nothing of the events between God and Satan that brought on his suffering (Job 1-2). He simply feels or knows that, while he is not perfect, he is suffering beyond any deserved punishment. Job's supposed friends believe they are wisely instructing him and admonishing him that he is indeed getting what he deserves. We know from the opening chapters that Job's friends are wrong. Job rejects their self-proclaimed wisdom, but Job cannot get God to respond to him (Job 3-37). When God answers Job (Job 38-41), he is forced to admit that he spoke in the

ways he did because he truly did not understand God's majesty and wisdom (Job 42). Wisdom is an important theme in Job, and there is much about wisdom worthy of our attention, but this type of wisdom is more philosophical, in contrast to the observational and practical wisdom of Proverbs. We are not given a specific clear-cut answer as to why the good, innocent people of the world suffer and why some terribly wicked people seem to be exempt from suffering. The short and difficult answer is that God is Sovereign and can do as He knows best, and that man cannot, in this life, always know why. Psalm 37 and Psalm 73 also deal with this type of question, perhaps giving a more satisfying answer in their pronouncements of God's final judgment upon the wicked and vindication of the righteous. God's greater blessing of Job in the end than what he had before does suggest a greater, final reward for those righteous who have had to suffer in this life (Job 42).

Ecclesiastes is a work of Solomon that also presents philosophical ponderings (Eccl. 1). While Job asks why innocent people suffer in a world created by a Benevolent and Almighty God, Ecclesiastes asks, "What is the meaning of life on earth?" Solomon assesses his practice of using (or abusing) his wisdom and wealth to find happiness and meaning to life in pleasure, work, possessions, and self-indulgence of every kind (Eccl. 2-11). His conclusion is that all such efforts are vanity, meaningless, worthless. He uses this term 37 times before coming to his reassessment of life and his encouragement to youth (and to all) in the conclusion of the book to: "Fear God and keep his commandment: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:1-7; Eccl. 12:13-14).

Proverbs is also a product of Solomon, but is more a book of practical wisdom, with its brief and forceful sayings designed to give guidance in dealing with everyday

situations in one's relationship with God and man. Its design is to impart wisdom and understanding to those who consider its words and to encourage the practice of those principles taught. We will expand these thoughts in the "Introduction to Proverbs" itself.

Wisdom Literature In Other Bible Books

Since God is an all-wise God, we ought to expect to see His wisdom reflected throughout His revelation of His Word. Wisdom, as defined in this lesson, can be seen scattered throughout Scripture, as seen in the chart at the end of the chapter. Sometimes these are brief wisdom sayings; at other times they involve longer themes.

Israel was supposed to be guided in her faith by priests who taught the Law, by wise men who provided counsel, and by prophets who were spokesmen for God's judgments (Jer. 18:18). When priests, wise men, and prophets would not teach in their respective areas, they lost their authority. Any one of these men who rejected the true efforts of the others would be rejected by God and should be rejected by the people. Each of these classes of guides to Israel opposed the work of Jeremiah, and he opposed them (cf. Jer. 2:8; Jer. 5:13; Jer. 8:8-9). In Jeremiah 8:8-9, God rebukes those who falsely claim to be wise:

How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'? Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord; so what wisdom do they have? (NKJV).

In our relationships with God and man, the wisdom of the Word of the Lord is what ultimately counts.

WL in the Bible was written with some specific goals in mind. Those principal aims were:

- (1) to reduce broad truth to a simple statement or image;
 - (2) to establish priorities that distinguish the wise, and so to define wisdom;
 - (3) to identify and discuss key philosophical questions or problematic issues;
 - (4) to persuade the foolish and the ignorant to search for life's truths and in other ways pursue conscientious living;
 - (5) to mark the impassés (God's sovereignty, mysteries of nature, etc.); [here "impassés" refer to questions for which we have no complete knowledge or understanding]
 - (6) to share proven insights on practical matters;
 - (7) to warn against excesses and foster temperance (e.g. alcohol, food, sexual conduct, anger);
 - (8) to define virtue and vice;
 - (9) to teach *joie de vivre* (French for "joy in living");
 - (10) to extol wisdom as the greatest good; and
 - (11) to complement conventional theology by increasing personal awareness of propriety.
- The list remains open in two ways: (1) it represents a partial overview with no claim to be complete, (2) it presents aims perceived eclectically from throughout the wisdom corpus, rather than features exhibited within any one wisdom book.¹⁷

Wisdom Of The Ancient Near East

Since the capacity for wisdom is part of man's created nature, we should expect to see WL of some type in all societies. The Bible mentions the existence of wise men or wisdom practices in several nations outside Israel. Pharaoh summoned all the wise men of Egypt to interpret his dream (Gen. 41:8), but only Joseph could do so (Gen. 41:17-32). Joseph was chosen as the "wise man" to prepare for the famine in Egypt (Gen. 41:33; Gen. 41:39), Daniel and other Hebrew youths were added to the Babylonian wisdom class, but God gifted Daniel and friends to be "ten times better" than all the others (Dan. 1:17-20). Other texts

name wisdom in Edom (Jer. 49:7; Obad. 8), Phoenicia (Ezek. 28; Zech. 9:2), Assyria (Isa. 10:13), and Persia (Esth. 1:13). Of Solomon it was said, “And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:30).

Considerable archaeological finds of wisdom texts in the Ancient Near East (hereafter, ANE) illustrate the veracity of the Biblical record. As noted below, there are resemblances in some themes and descriptive language between some of the Egyptian and Hebrew WL. However, the explanations for and interpretations based on those similarities can be puzzling to the Bible student:

Instructional literature from Egypt has close affinities to the admonitions found in Proverbs 1:2-9:18 and Proverbs 22:17-24:34 and are dated from the Old Kingdom right on down to the Late dynastic Period and Hellenistic Rule. The following is a list of those texts belonging to the Egyptian instruction literature.

The Old Kingdom (2686-2160 B.C.)

The Instruction for Ka-gem-ni
The Instruction of Prince Hor-dedef
The Instruction of Ptah-hotep

The First Intermediate Period (2160-2040 B.C.)

The Instruction for King Meri-ka-Re

The Middle Kingdom (2040-1558 B.C.)

The Instruction of King Amen-em-het
The Instruction of Sehetep-ib-Re

The New Kingdom (1558-1085 B.C.)

The Instruction of Ani
The Instruction of Amen-em-Ope

The Late Dynastic Period and Hellenistic Rule

The Instruction of ‘Onchsheshonqy (fifth or fourth century B.C.)
The Instruction of the Papyrus Insinger (304-30 B.C.).

In short, wisdom literature existed around the Fertile Crescent not only before Solomon but even before the Hebrews appeared in history!¹⁸

It is suggested by most modern liberal scholars, and some that consider themselves conservative, that the Israelite WL owes much of its material to the cultures of several nations in the ANE.¹⁹ There are certain kinds of resemblances between ANE writings and Israelite WL that go back to the third millennium.²⁰ As we will show below, those similarities **do not**, explicitly or implicitly, teach that Israel's wisdom came from the WL of pagan nations in the ANE, written before or during Israel's existence as a nation.

Since time and space prohibit a comparison of these several ANE wisdom texts with the wisdom texts of Scripture, we will consider only some passages from the most frequently quoted, "The Instruction (Wisdom) of Amenemope" (this name is variously spelled and sometimes ends with a "t"). The problem stated by many modern scholars is that they believe that Proverbs 22:17-24:34 was directly borrowed or copied from the Egyptian source, "The Instruction of Amenemope." When we show below that there is no case for direct borrowing of WL from Amenemope into Israelite teaching, we will have given a reasonable solution(s) that applies to all of the supposed cases of Israel borrowing WL from her ANE neighbors.

Amenemope was a pagan Egyptian scribe whose work has been variously dated from the 18th century to the 6th century B.C. The present consensus among most scholars posits a date of about 1200-1000 B.C.,²¹ before Solomon reigned as king in Israel and wrote his WL. Amenemope's stated purpose in his "Instruction" was to instruct his youngest son about life, well-being, and the duties of courtiers (those who stand in attendance before

kings to serve or advise in their particular skills). The work consists of a fairly lengthy introduction followed by the thirty chapters of wisdom instruction²²:

That there is a general connection between this portion of Proverbs and the Wisdom of Amenophis [sic] is scarcely in dispute. What is not so clear, however, is the question of their interrelationship. Baumgartner affirmed that scholars in general had accepted the theory that Amenophis furnished the original for Proverbs 22:17-23:11, but while this has been the prevailing view it has not by any means gone unchallenged.²³

We will shortly investigate this alleged connection of Solomon to Amenemope.

Solomon's Wisdom

The matter of Solomon borrowing or copying a number of proverbs from a pagan Egyptian scribe to place into his book of wisdom proverbs for the Hebrews reflects unfavorably upon the idea of Solomon's God-given wisdom and the authorship of Proverbs:

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee (1 Kings 3:9-12).

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-34).

If Solomon (971-931 B.C.) was gifted by God and surpassed the uninspired wisdom of his day, why would he need to copy proverbs from a pagan Egyptian scribe? Or is it possible, as liberal scholars contend, that Solomon did not write Proverbs? These questions will be discussed in greater detail in the pages following and in the material on the Introduction to Proverbs.

Proverbs Of Solomon And Amenemope

What leads supposedly scholarly men to “see” borrowing from Amenemope’s work by Solomon? Consider these alleged parallels:

Proverbs

1. Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge (Prov. 22:17).

2. Have not I written for you thirty sayings of admonitions and knowledge (Prov. 22:20).

Amenemope

Give thine ear and hear what I say, And apply thine heart to apprehend (Amen-em-ope).

Consider these thirty chapters: they delight they instruct (Amen-em-ope).

-
- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. To show you what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you? (Prov. 22:21). | Knowledge how to answer him that speaketh, And (how) to carry back a report to one that sent him (Amen-em-ope). |
| 4. Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate (Prov. 22:22). | Beware of robbing the poor and of oppressing the afflicted (Amen-em-ope). |
| 5. Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man (Prov. 22:24). | Associate not with a passionate man Nor approach him for conversation (Amen-em-ope). |
| 6 Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men (Prov. 22:29). | A scribe who is skillful in his business Findeth himself worthy to be a courtler (Amen-em-ope). |
| 7. Do not remove an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their Cause against you (Prov. 23:10-11). | Covet not (even) a cubit of land, And violate not the widow's boundary. A furrow...worn by time, He who wrongfully seizeth it in a field, Though he claim it with false oaths, Will be taken captive by the might of the Moon (-God) (Amen-em-ope). |

There are more **alleged** parallels between Proverbs and the writings of Amenemope, but these are the strongest evidence (?) that frequently has been set forth as proof of this allegation. Fritsch uses the Revised Standard Version in his Bible quotes, but there is no substantial difference between the RSV and the KJV in these quotes **except** at number 2 (Prov. 22:20). We will explain the crucial difference there in a moment.

Consider number 1. What else would one say if one were speaking or writing and wanting to capture the attention of one's audience to get them to listen and think about what is being said? Words to the effect found in either source (Proverbs or Amenemope) would simply echo what men have been saying for millennia when they wish to teach something to someone. The commonality of words used hardly demands or even suggests that either source borrowed from the other.

We'll discuss number 2 last.

Number 3's passages are not even speaking about the same things. Amenemope is a scribe teaching potential leaders how to refute an accusation made and to reply to or charge the one who made it. Proverbs 22:21 is concerned with teaching the truth to the student and having that student report that truth to others.

Number 4 is another example of general advice where it would be difficult to think of a different way to say the same things. This is a pitifully weak case to try to sustain the idea Solomon borrowed this saying from Amenemope. Also note that Solomon gives a reason not to rob the poor—namely, because “he is poor,” meaning that he does not have the means or influence to obtain someone to defend him. The second line of Proverbs 22:22 is a parallel to line one and adds “at the gate,” where city court was held. When we consider these two additional points that Solomon makes, they suggest that the likelihood of borrowing is even more remote.

Number 5 is another general observation with nothing to commend the idea of borrowing. Friendship and association are not the same; neither are “going with” an angry man and approaching such a one for conversation.

Number 6 is another saying that teaches a common theme—namely, that diligence in one's work or business is indicative of a skillful man who will become known by

the leaders in the land, and that his skills will be recognized and utilized by important men such as kings. His success in his work will lift him above the average man. Note also that Amenemope restricts this exaltation to a skillful scribe, while Solomon applies the thought to the field of excellence in business in general.

Number 7 is simply another of the common warnings in ANE literature against theft by moving boundary lines. If copying were involved, why would Solomon change “widow” to “orphan”? Both were helpless individuals whose persons the Lord protected by commandments many times (cf. Deut. 10:18; Psm. 68:5). The difference between the Lord as a strong Redeemer and being taken captive by the moon-god are obvious, but we are told that Solomon cleaned up or adapted the teaching of Amenemope for the Hebrews.

What can we say of all these alleged parallels attributed to copying? They simply are not that impressive and fail to prove the concept of borrowing. One writer noted that when this idea of alleged copying was first promoted that it took off like wildfire:

Erman's article aroused great interest in the work throughout the world of Old Testament studies. Articles appeared in a multitude of journals, all following Erman's thesis and adding more and more examples of parallels to the seven which he had modestly proposed. Indeed it looked remarkably as though an academic parlour game of “Spot the Parallel” was in progress, with marks awarded for each ingenious parallel suggested and bonus points for emendations [changes in the Bible's text- tjc] of the text.²⁵ [Adolf Erman was the German author whose writings on this subject were widely embraced.]

Critics of the Bible will jump at any chance to make it appear that the Bible's claims of being inspired by God

are false. They have no shame, for time after time their efforts at attempting to make the Bible nothing more than the product of man are exposed and rebuffed by the truth. They simply wipe the egg off their collective faces and embrace the latest fad.

We spoke before of God's use of wisdom in His creation (Prov. 8:22-36) and the imparting of wisdom to mankind (Gen. 1:26-27; Job 38:36; Psm. 51:6). We further contended that this wisdom was passed on generation to generation in a body of knowledge that God had revealed and that man had developed through his observation and experience. These precepts may have been transmitted orally and in written texts. This WL would have spread throughout the different cultures of the nations of the world and been modified by them to fit their pagan notions of multiple gods, since they lost their belief in the One God of Creation and traded the truth for gods of their own creation. This is highly likely the process that has brought about the different "creation myths" and "flood stories" from all across the nations of the earth.²⁶ There was truth in the original Creation account, known by Adam and Eve and passed on to one generation after another. The same is true about the original account of the Flood: that would have been passed on from Noah's children to their children and on and on.²⁷ This practice would also account for the many resemblances between the WL of the pagan nations and Israel's WL. Therefore, one hardly needs to claim that the likenesses that appear between these writings are due to borrowing from the Egyptians by the Hebrew writers:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being

understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents. Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Rom. 1:18-32).

Since Solomon spoke on wisdom themes by inspiration (1 Kings 3:9-12; 1 Kings 4:29-34), there would have been no need for him to use previously recorded sources of uninspired writers, unless he was directed by the Holy Spirit to do so. It is somewhat difficult to link

the names of “Agur the son of Jakeh” (Prov. 30:1) and “King Lemuel” (Prov. 31:1) directly to the person of Solomon or persons of Hebrew nationality. However, since they make up part of the book of Proverbs attributed to him or his guidance (Prov. 1:1), he must have included them by direction of the Holy Spirit. We’ll speak more on the possible meanings of Agur and Lemuel later.

One possible explanation for the likenesses between Solomon and Amenemope is that Solomon was inspired to include proverbs of wisdom already known from a body of WL that God had revealed to mankind long ago, which over the centuries had been diffused into the cultures of the ANE nations. The reason that there are similarities between Solomon and Amenemope is because Amenemope’s work simply contained some of those same themes which were already known in the culture of Egypt, where perhaps the Egyptians learned them from the Israelite sojourn there hundreds of years earlier. Whether this is so, it is a hypothesis that is as deserving, if not more so, as the ideas from the liberal scholars. In any case the quotes below are also a sufficient explanation that does not exclude the possibility just mentioned.

If we have to be cautious about differences of form and content we can be more affirmative about the similarities of thought and expression where the subject matter does coincide. The similarities become particularly noticeable in the class of wisdom literature to which Proverbs and Amenemope belong. The folk wisdom enshrined in these collections of precepts is the distillation of the accumulated experience of related peoples with cognate languages living in similar circumstances and meeting comparable situations. It is not surprising that they have much in common; it would be noteworthy indeed if their reactions were particularly disparate. In fact, much of this wisdom relates to the community of experience shared not only by the

inhabitants of the ancient Near East but by all men everywhere. It is, in short, good sense.

I think we are at last in a position to draw some conclusions. Those who have paid attention and listened to my words will not be surprised if I confess to some doubt about the existence of a direct connection between Proverbs and Amenemope. The connection so casually assumed is often very superficial, rarely more than similarity of subject matter, often quite differently treated and does not survive detailed examination. I believe it can merit no more definite verdict than “not proven” and that it certainly does not exist to the extent that is often assumed....²⁸

Thirty Sayings And Thirty Chapters

What of the number 2 quote at the beginning of this section? Does the supposed reference of Solomon in Proverbs 22:20 to “thirty sayings” reflect an attempt by him to mirror Amenemope’s “thirty chapters,” as is often claimed? The answer is, “No!” No standard English translation before the RSV (followed by the NIV and NRSV) ever translated the Hebrew word *shalishim* as thirty. There is certainly no universal agreement as to the propriety of this translation:

Shalishim (*Qere*) **shlshwm** (*Kethib*). **Excellent things**. This word is difficult. KJV, NASB, NIV marg[in] translate “excellent things” as the pl[ural] of *shalish*. RSV, NIV and many translate “thirty sayings” as from *sheloshim*. Another possibility is *shilshom* “formerly” (NIV marg[in], NASB marg[in]). The question is complicated by the somewhat similar Egyptian work “Wisdom of Amen-em-Opet” which is divided into thirty chapters and urges attention to “these thirty chapters.” Some claim that a dependence on this work can be found in the following sayings of Prov. 22:22-24:22 which can be divided into thirty sayings. First, it may be said that dependence on the Egyptian work is sometimes

overemphasized and cannot be found at all in the latter part of this section [of Proverbs]. Second, the division into thirty sayings is not certain. They may be divided differently.²⁹

Since Amenemope is a much longer work (30 chapters) than Proverbs 22:17-24:22, with much longer chapters, those who claim direct borrowing have serious difficulty finding the “thirty sayings” with which to section in the latter work. Only about one third of this section of Proverbs has any notable correspondence to Amenemope,³⁰ and those supposed parallels only run from Proverbs 22:17-23:11. Ruffle’s article on Proverbs and Amenemope shows the difficulty of allowing the reading of “thirty” in Proverbs 22:20 to stand. Such a reading is a concession to the insistence by many liberal scholars that Solomon (or someone) borrowed this section of Proverbs from Amenemope:

Firstly, a numeral in Hebrew can only stand by itself when the noun it qualifies is in close proximity and unambiguously linked. We would therefore have to assume that a word such as [sayings] had dropped out. Specifications of measure, weight or time may be omitted but [sayings] hardly qualifies in this category.

A second objection is that [thirty] is not as firmly supported by the context as some commentators suggest. It had been proposed before the Teaching of Amenemope was known but without meeting acceptance. Before Erman’s suggestion was made scholars had divided this section into different numbers of maxims and Erman himself did not suggest that “30” in its Proverbs setting had any significance. He suggested that the Hebrew compiler had inserted it mechanically from the Aramaic or Hebrew translation which he postulated, and thought that the word had lost its significance in its new context. Gressmann and Sellin however were sure that they could find 30 divisions within this part of

Proverbs and most other scholars have been persuaded by their arguments, but it is remarkable that the divisions are not more obviously distinguished, especially since [thirty] itself is not explained by a noun. For instance, Scott and Whybray, to quote two recent writers, have to take 23:23 out of order and treat it as one maxim so that Proverbs 23:22 and 24/25 can be grouped to form another. Does 23:26 belong with verses 27 and 28 or is it a separate maxim? Should 23:12 and 23:19 be counted or not? Where does 22:28 fit? Once we begin looking for 30 sections it becomes easy to find them, but it is arguable whether they are indisputably clear and obvious.³¹ [the Hebrew words in the original are not duplicated here, but translated in brackets.]

Another writer refers to Ruffle's article and adds:

[S]ome have felt that the translation "previously" makes more sense because it can be seen as parallel to the "today" of verse 19...Another matter of form concerns the length of the units that comprise the larger work. The "Words of the Wise" in the book of Proverbs generally has four-to-six-line sections, while Amenemope is comprised of chapters that more resemble individual psalms in length. While some of the chapters may not be entirely homogeneous in subject matter, they average twelve to sixteen lines in length, thereby being substantially different from what is found in Proverbs.³²

The commonalities between Proverbs and other wisdom material in the Bible with the various writings of WL from ANE nations do not derive from copying or borrowing from the pagan sources and cleaning them up to make them suitable for monotheistic Hebrew faith. Wisdom is as eternal as God and has been a part of His progressive revelation to mankind since Creation. There has always been One God, and His imparted wisdom is purer than and superior to all types of man's perverted

wisdom (Jas. 3:15-17). The major distinguishing feature between Israel's WL and that of the other ANE peoples was their faith in the One, All-Wise God:

The concept of "the fear of the Lord" distinguished Hebrew wisdom from its ancient Near Eastern counterparts. For Israel, wisdom and the knowledge of God were inseparable because God was the source and dispenser of insight and understanding (cf. Job 12:13; Prov. 2:5-6; Isa. 31:1-2). This "Yahweh orientation" of Hebrew wisdom meant that the knowledge of God had implications for Israel's emotional and spiritual life (as expressed in Old Testament poetry) and for her physical and experiential life (as reflected in Old Testament wisdom).³³

Apocryphal Books Of Wisdom

The "apocrypha" are books that were never accepted by the Jews as inspired or placed into the Hebrew Bible (OT). The word "apocrypha" means "hard to understand" or "hidden" and was applied to these books because they were not authentic revelations from God.³⁴ While some apocryphal books (seven full books plus additions to Esther and Daniel) are accepted by Roman Catholicism as inspired and belonging in the Bible,³⁵ the Jews do not accept them, and neither have most Protestant denominations.

Two of these apocryphal books are written in the general style of the Hebrew WL books of Scripture. These are The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, also called The Wisdom of Sirach. The Wisdom of Solomon was written in the first century B.C. but actually pretends to be Solomon speaking.³⁶ A book is also called a pseudepigrapha, meaning "a false writing," when it falsely ascribes the author or content as coming from one who did not write it. Ecclesiasticus—this is not the inspired OT book of Ecclesiastes—was likely written about 130 B.C.³⁷ Both of

these books came from the intertestamental period, between the closing of the OT and the beginning of the NT. Accordingly, they can provide some insight into the history of the Jews in that period and the setting shortly before the beginning of NT revelation.

The Wisdom of Solomon, sometimes called “The Book of Wisdom,” is 19 chapters long and briefly outlined as follows:

The Book of Wisdom

The Book of Wisdom is known only in Greek and may be the last book of the Old Testament to be written. It makes use of the philosophical arguments found in Philo of Alexandria and other Jewish writers in the Greek world of Alexandria, Egypt in the first century B.C., and employs many Greek oratorical devices of the same period. The book can be divided into the following major sections.

Chapters 1:1-6:21: Justice and wisdom under the eye of God brings victory and immortality to the just.

Chapters 6:22-11:1: Solomon’s praise of wisdom for its unmatched value.

Chapters 11:2-19:5: A long review of the history of Israel up to the exodus as evidence of God’s mercy on Israel.

Chapter 19:6-22: Concluding psalm in praise of wisdom.³⁸ [Boadt is Roman Catholic and therefore accepts this book as an authentic part of Scripture.]

Ecclesiasticus has 51 chapters of mixed themes and is difficult to outline:

Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)

Sirach is the longest of the wisdom books with fifty-one chapters. It is a mixture of proverbs and lengthy essays on major themes within the wisdom tradition: use of speech, self-control, evil friends, the value of work, death, sickness, etc. Unlike Proverbs, it tends to group many sayings on the same topic close together: chapter 9 treats

women, chapter 4 discusses the duties to parents, and chapter 29 deals with the proper use of speech. Between these discussions, Sirach has grouped reflections, hymns, poems and essays on (1) the value of wisdom and (2) how to obtain it. These are spaced throughout the book (chapters 1, 14, 24, etc.) but appear most dramatically at the end in a long recital of Israel's history which the author calls "In Praise of Famous Men." It stretches from chapters 44 through 50 and describes all the important Old Testament figures as wise men. At the same time, the author's interest in priestly matters and Torah is apparent from the large amount of space he gives to Aaron and priests after him....

Above all, Sirach stresses the ethical aspects of everyday life. He exalts the role of law and fear of the Lord as true wisdom. As a result, wisdom becomes tamed, and the wild questions of a Job and Qoheleth are no longer heard. But he does recognize a God of compassion, the ambiguity and uncertainty of human life, and the limits of human knowledge. Wisdom can be attained, but it is in the form of guidelines for human action, and not in speculation.³⁹ [Qoheleth is the Hebrew word translated as "the Preacher" in the inspired OT book of Ecclesiastes 1:1.]

Most Christians go their entire lives without ever reading the apocryphal books included in the Roman Catholic Bibles, and their faith certainly does not suffer for not having done so. Still, one can read these wisdom books mentioned above and learn from them how the wisdom concept was promoted by some dedicated **though uninspired** Jews in the two centuries before Christ came:

In all that has been said here, no suggestion has been made that Protestant Christians or Jews should revise the limits of their canons. Fundamentally, the need for studying the Apocrypha is not based on decisions about their status as Scripture. It is based on the fact that these texts open up to our view the three

centuries concerning which the Protestant and Jewish canonical Scriptures are almost completely silent. In so doing, they become indispensable for a more accurate grasp of the world of the New Testament, as well as the world of emerging rabbinic Judaism.⁴⁰ [Our Bibles are from a Christian perspective, not a Protestant one.]

I found these two books on wisdom thought-provoking and educational, just as I have other uninspired writings on Bible topics. Although not always true to Biblical teaching (as is the case in most humanly authored books), they can be read with profit.

Wisdom Literature In The New Testament

No study of the WL of the Bible would be complete without a consideration of wisdom in the NT. In Matthew 2:1-12, wise men from the east (non-Jews) came to see Christ and worship Him. We are not told how their wisdom played a role in their knowing about Jesus' birth. At twelve years old, Jesus' wisdom astonished the doctors of the Law of Moses at Jerusalem (Luke 2:46-47). Luke 2:52 states that Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," which were precisely those areas intended by WL to improve in a person. In Luke 4:23, Jesus quoted a familiar proverb to His audience: "Physician, heal thyself." While an entire lesson could be presented on this topic, we can only give a brief overview.

In Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31 (cf. Acts 7:22) the word [*sophia*, Greek] is used as a secular term to praise the wisdom of Solomon. Jesus' wisdom is extolled in a similar way (Mark 6:2; Luke 2:40; Luke 2:52). The wisdom of God is referred to in Luke 11:49; Eph. 3:10, and also in doxologies (Rom. 11:33; Rom. 16:27; Rev. 7:12). The wisdom of God speaks to the world (Luke 11:49) and sends messengers (Matt. 23:34). The wisdom of the risen Christ is also praised (Rev. 5:12); in

him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Col. 2:3).

The faithful have received wisdom as a gift from the Spirit (Eph. 1:8; Col. 1:9); therefore, they should strive for wisdom (Eph. 5:15; Col. 4:5). There are excellent people of wisdom in the communities (Acts 6:3; Acts 6:10), and wisdom should be taught in the church (Eph. 3:10; Col. 1:28; cf. Jas. 3:13).

The most important discussion of how divine and earthly wisdom contradict each other occurs in 1 Cor. 1-2 (with 1 Cor. 3:18-19, cf. 2 Cor. 1:12;...*See also* Matt. 11:25; Col. 2:23; Jas. 3:13-18.⁴¹

Sections of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) show WL characteristics, as does much of Christ's teaching. What else could we expect? Jesus said of Himself:

The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; **and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here** (Matt. 12:42).

Among mere men, Solomon excelled in wisdom over any before him or after him (1 Kings 3:12; 1 Kings 4:30; 1 Kings 10:23-24), but Jesus was the Son of God in the flesh, the very image of God's person (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2-3), Who is all-wise (Prov. 2:6; Jude 25).

We commented earlier on the elaborate contrast that Paul proclaims between godly wisdom and the foolish wisdom of the world in 1 Corinthians 1-2. Those chapters are so instructive on God's wisdom being rooted in Christ and His cross. The same wisdom is reflected in God's purpose for Christ's church (Eph. 3:9-11). Ultimately, we are told by Paul that **it is Christ "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"** (Col. 2:3).

The epistle of James is considered to be the most wisdom-oriented book of the NT:

As might be expected, the Epistle of James, in which one of Jesus' brothers writes in a manner as that of the Sermon on the Mount, contains words of proverbial nature. Among these are such expressions as "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22) and "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:20, KJV).

Peter's word, "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8) is one of the most familiar Biblical proverbs, and in 2 Pet. 2:22, he concludes his scathing denunciation of false teachers by referring to two maxims, the first being from Proverbs 26:11, although the source of the second is unknown. It is significant that Peter introduces this reference by calling it "the true proverb."⁴²

The NT has much to contribute to the WL of the Bible.

Introduction To Proverbs And Exegesis Of Proverbs 1:1-7

The Proverbs are not just distilled wisdom set forth in witty, two-line sayings. They are designed to make us **think!** One must think to understand and apply them!

The word used to designate the contents of the book is *mashal*, usually translated "proverb." Although the root is disputed among scholars, the general opinion is that it derives from the verb *mashal*, "to represent, be like." Thus the meaning of the noun would be "likeness," and a *mashal*, or proverb, would be a statement that seeks to reveal the true nature of one thing by comparing it to something else. In the Old Testament generally, the term is used variously. It may signify a simple folk saying (1 Sam. 10:12; 1 Sam. 24:13), an allegory (Ezek. 17:2), an enigmatic saying (Ezek. 20:49) a taunt (Isa. 14:4; Hab. 2:6), a lament (Mic. 2:4), a prophetic

discourse (Num. 23:7; Num. 24:15), a didactic discourse (Psm. 49:4), or a plea (Job 29:1). In the book of Proverbs it signifies either aphorisms (as in Prov. 10:1-22:16) or discourses (as in Prov. 1-9; and Prov. 23:29-35; Prov. 27:23-27).⁴³

Proverbs 1:1 says these are “proverbs of Solomon,” David’s son and king over the united kingdom of Israel. We have already noted the Biblical references to Solomon’s God-given wisdom (1 Kings 3:12; 1 Kings 4:29-34; 1 Kings 10:23-24). God had also promised Solomon that one of his seed would sit upon the throne ruling Israel, as long as he was faithful and did not “go and serve other gods, and worship them” (1 Kings 9:6-9):

But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives. Which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice. And had commanded him concerning this

thing, that he should not go after other gods:
but he kept not that which the Lord commanded
(1 Kings 11:1-10).

Why would a man with Solomon's wisdom allow himself to get into such sinful situations? Why did God allow someone as foolishly sinful as Solomon to be the author of two Biblical books on wisdom? We have tried to answer these questions below.

Out of the wisdom God gave to Solomon, he "spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs were a thousand and five" (1 Kings 4:29-32). Thus, Solomon was inspired by God's wisdom in the giving of his proverbs and songs, even though the book of Proverbs preserves only several hundred of the three thousand proverbs, and only three songs are preserved in Scripture (Psm. 72; Psm. 127; S. of Sol.). These proverbs may have been written earlier in Solomon's life, before his heart was turned away after other gods. Also, the truth is truth, whether spoken by a reprobate or a righteous person. All that Solomon said about loving, serving, and trusting God (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 2:5-6; Prov. 3:5-6; Prov. 9:10; et al.) is still true and greatly rewarding, even if Solomon didn't always follow his own teaching. In fact, in one Proverb he warned, "Cease from listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge" (Prov. 19:27, NKJV). Sadly, Solomon did this very thing:

Quite clearly, then, the gift of wisdom did not include the gift of faithfulness to moral principle, so far as his personal relations were concerned. He knew perfectly well that Deuteronomy 17:16-17 had sternly warned against the very vices he had indulged in: multiplying of horses, wives, silver, and gold. He was well able to instruct others in the wisdom of moderation and self-control, and he had a fine mental grasp of the insight that the "fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 1:7). But as he found

himself invested with absolute power, boundless wisdom, honor, and limitless wealth to acquire or pay for whatever he wanted, he began to indulge his carnal desires without restraint.⁴⁴ [Prov. 1:7 says “knowledge” and Prov. 9:10 says, “wisdom.”]

Finally, the book of Ecclesiastes is another work of Solomon in which it seems that he tries to correct much of his apostasy, noting that seeking happiness and meaning in life cannot be accomplished by preoccupation with worldly pursuits (Eccl. 2:1-11). A good bit of Solomon’s life had to pass by for him to realize the utter vanity of all his works and efforts (Eccl. 2:11). Then in Ecclesiastes 12, he seems to note personally the progression of old age and its debilitating effects (Eccl. 12:1-7).

In the last two verses of the book he notes what his life should have been about all along. The “conclusion” is, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:13-14). Solomon, at the conclusion of his life, seemingly bitter about the way that he had wasted much of it, applies the wisdom and understanding that God had blessed him with so many years before. In Solomon’s life and writings, God has allowed us to see the futility of worldly wisdom and the victory in wisdom that fears Him and keeps His commandments:

The life of Solomon is a solemn reminder that wisdom is an attainment quite distinct from a sincere heart animated by a real love for God’s will. [Knowing] Wisdom is not equivalent to godliness—“the fear of the Lord.” And yet without godliness no wise man will use his wisdom to a consistently good purpose, so far as his own life is concerned.⁴⁵

Authorship And Date

Earlier attempts to deny Solomonic authorship of most of the Proverbs were based on a literary style that some thought could only be from the Greek period after the exile (ca. 350 B.C. or later), far too late to be Solomon's work.⁴⁶ Those theories for a late date have been shown to be in error, for there is no literary style in Proverbs that cannot be dated earlier than Solomon as well as later.⁴⁷

Archer answers another objection sometimes made to Solomonic authorship:

Proverbs is said to reflect the social manners and vices which are known to have existed after the exile, especially in the urban centers of Judah. This, however, must be regarded as a very dubious generalization. No proof has been adduced that a single custom or vice mentioned in Proverbs was unknown to the culture of Jerusalem or the other large cities of Israel during Solomon's reign.⁴⁸

Both authorship and date are tied to the different collections in Proverbs. The several collections generally are listed as follows:

Proverbs 1:1-9:18: Solomon, as Proverbs 1:1 indicates.

Proverbs 10:1-22:16: Also proverbs of Solomon as stated (Prov. 10:1).

Proverbs 22:17-24:22: Simply titled, "Words of the Wise" (Prov. 22:17).

Proverbs 24:23-34: Titled, "These things also belong to the wise" (Prov. 24:23).

Proverbs 25:1-29:27: Proverbs of Solomon, collected and copied by scribes in Hezekiah's court (Prov. 25:1).

Proverbs 30:1-33: "The words of Agur the son of Jakah" (Prov. 30:1).

Prov. 31:1-31: "The words of King Lemuel...that his mother taught him" (Prov. 31:1).

There are no substantive reasons why we cannot say with confidence that Solomon authored Proverbs 1:1-29:27, and that he either authored or collected Proverbs 30-31.

We have already dealt with the theory that Solomon copied or borrowed Proverbs 22:17-24:22 from the work of the Egyptian scribe Amememope, and we showed that concept to be without merit. But what of “the words of Agur” (Prov. 30:1-33) and “the words of King Lemuel” (Prov. 31:1-31)? If these were not Solomon’s work, may it not be possible that other sections are not his? First, it has not been proven that these are not Solomon’s works and that the names of Agur and Lemuel do not apply to Solomon in a symbolic fashion:

Probably idealizing his own life, the author of the last two chapters of Proverbs began the passage with a bevy of names: “The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal” (Prov. 30:1). According to the Talmud, “Solomon was called by six names: Solomon, Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:25), Koheleth, Son of Jakeh, Agur, and Lemuel.” Apparently the names were allegorical. Agur meant “gatherer,” or “convener,” or “I shall fear.” Jakeh meant “obedient” or “pious” and may have referred to David, Solomon’s father.

“Agur the son of Jakeh” shared the proverbs in Proverbs 30 with Ithiel and Ucal. The speculation is that Ithiel and Ucal were two of the wise man’s pupils. The name Ucal occurs only here in Scripture; the name Ithiel is also found among the Benjamites listed in Nehemiah 11:7. Ithiel means “God is with me” and Ucal means “I shall be able.” The suggestion is that these names were symbolic of the moral character of those who receive divine instruction.⁴⁹ [The source of the reference from the Talmud is *Avoth d’Rab. Nathan, c.39*. Phillips took this information from **The Companion Bible**, now published by Kregel. No attribution is given as to the author of

the copious notes and information in this Bible but it is widely believed to have been E. W. Bullinger.]

Whether Agur means Solomon was a “gatherer” of the Proverbs he had put into writing, or a “convener” of assemblies for teaching (one of the meanings of “the Preacher” in Eccl. 1:1), or the man who spoke of “the fear of the Lord” so frequently (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 1:29; Prov. 2:5; Prov. 3:7; Prov. 8:13; Prov. 9:10; Prov. 10:27; Prov. 14:26; Prov. 31:30), the name Agur would fit him.

Second, the passage in Proverbs 30:1-33 also fits well with Solomon’s life. Proverbs 30:1-6 begins with an acknowledgement that he really wasn’t wise, nor did he really know God, since God was in heaven and no one had been to heaven and learned the secrets of God’s wisdom and power (Prov. 30:2-4). This fits well with Solomon’s pessimistic view of his own life in most of Ecclesiastes. Proverbs 30:5-6 provides a happy solution to the problem, since God’s Word, pure and sufficient, and God Himself protect those faithful to Him. This closely parallels Solomon’s solution to his failure to find happiness and meaning in life through worldly pursuits. To “fear God and keep his commandments,” one must know His Word and trust Him fully (Eccl. 12:13-14). The latter part of Proverbs 30:15-33 can also be connected to Solomon’s wisdom interests in the animal creation on the earth as he spoke of trees, plants and “of animals, of birds, of creeping things [possibly reptiles], and of fishes” (1 Kings 4:33, NKJV).

Third, Proverbs 31:1-31 also fits well with events in Solomon’s life. Lemuel means “to or for God,” and his praise to his mother’s counsel is a fitting tribute to close his book of Proverbs:

Who was King Lemuel and who was his mother?
One commentator declared that Agur and

Lemuel were not Hebrews; he imagined them to be Ishmaelites. He supposed that they lived in the vicinity of Israel and therefore had some nodding acquaintance with the religion and writings of the Jews...We cannot fully appreciate Proverbs 31 if we suppose it to have been written by an alien philosopher and later incorporated into the Hebrew Bible. The passage makes more sense when we accept the view of the Talmud that Agur and Lemuel were other names for Solomon.

The word translated “prophecy” in Proverbs 31:1 means “oracle” or “burden.” If ever a woman had a burden for her son, it was Solomon’s mother. His mother was Bathsheba and her burden was to keep her son from repeating her mistakes. And what mistakes they were!...

We do not need much imagination to know what she vowed when Solomon was born. She vowed that, God helping her, she would live in the spirit of David’s penitential Psalms and do all that a mother could do to bring up her son to know, love, and serve the Lord, the God of all grace.⁵⁰

It is Solomon’s mother, Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:24), who instructs him. These words were likely spoken to Solomon early in his manhood, either before he began to show signs of attractions to wine and women, or when he began showing signs of such weaknesses (cf. Eccl. 2:3; Eccl. 7:26). Elsewhere in the Proverbs, Solomon shows the traps of both alcohol (Prov. 20:1; Prov. 23:29-35) and seductive women (Prov. 5:1-23; Prov. 6:23-35; Prov. 7:4-27; et al.). How great to extol the virtues of a wife whose price was “**far above rubies**” (Prov. 31:10). Was this Solomon’s mother, a queen? Not likely, but it could have been her concept of the ideal wife, or perhaps it was Solomon’s. He would have been much better off with one wife such as is described than the 700 princesses he did have.

How sad that Solomon did not listen to his mother’s wise counsel! Yes, she had been sinful in adultery with

David (2 Sam. 11) and had paid a dear price in the loss of the first child she and David had conceived (2 Sam. 12:13-19). Often, those who have been in the depths of sin and live to tell about it can be greater promoters of morality than those who have never been there.

Whether Solomon had included this chapter of Proverbs in his collection early or late in his life, it is surely a tribute to his mother's wisdom and an honor to the worthy women who are good wives, as well as wisdom teaching for the young ladies seeking to be the kind of wife God wants them to be. Another likely pointer to Solomon's authorship of Proverbs 31 is "the fear of the Lord" theme prominent throughout the book that is linked to this beautiful chapter. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but **a woman that feareth the Lord**, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30).

Solomon reigned for forty years (1 Kings 11:41-43), from 971-931 B.C., so his proverbs would had to have been recorded during that time, or shortly thereafter by those scribes who heard his oral presentations and were obliged to copy them. The collection of Solomon's proverbs in Proverbs 25:1-29:27, which the scribes in King Hezekiah's court "copied out," were gathered into the already existing collection during Hezekiah's reign, ca. 715-686 B.C.. Likely the book of Proverbs was put in the final form at this time.

Inspiration Of Proverbs

Solomon's reception of unparalleled wisdom from God, which was the source of his proverbs and songs (1 Kings 4:29-34), should be all that is required to convince the Bible student that these were words from God for the betterment, guidance, and happiness of His people Israel, and by extension to all people.

Additionally, the Proverbs are strongly attached to God's Wisdom in the text. Every chapter has references to

the Lord, God, or other names that relate to God, except for Proverbs 4; Proverbs 7; Proverbs 13; and Proverbs 27. Even those chapters contrast the path of the righteous with the way of the wicked or make some type of reference to religious themes (cf. Prov. 4:14-19; Prov. 7:1-3; Prov. 7:27; Prov. 13:5-6; Prov. 13:12-13; Prov. 13:21; Prov. 27:20):

The authority for the proverbs derives, not from the personality of the counselor, nor from general experience, but ultimately from God. The biblical proverbs are not only tersely expressed deductions from daily experience, but also divine precepts (whether expressed or implied). Moreover, they grow out of, and point to, the fear of Yahweh as the basic principle of all true knowledge.⁵¹

The only major objection of the Jews to the authenticity of the book according to the Talmud, was Proverbs 26:4-5, where verse 4 says, "Do not answer a fool according to his folly," and verse 5 says to do so. The rabbis supposedly reconciled what appeared to them a contradiction by saying verse 4 dealt with matters of warning (the law), while verse 5 dealt with other (secular) matters. Proverbs is quoted in the Talmud as an inspired work.⁵²

The Structure Of Proverbs

Proverbs 1:1 opens with a father, Solomon, giving instruction to his son (Rehoboam? cf. 1 Kings 14:21). The book ends with a remembrance of the counsel of a mother to her son (Prov. 31:1). We outlined the headings of the various divisions of the book in the previous section on authorship and date. The book of Proverbs defies any detailed outlining other than by the collections already mentioned, primarily because topical matters are spread out in the various sections of the book. For example, instruction on proper speech—using the tongue, lips, mouth, answering, planning, speaking, giving testimony

and witnessing—are found in nearly every section of Proverbs. So too is “the fear of the Lord” motif. One great advantage of this year’s lectureship book is that B. J. has sorted out these verses on different topics and gathered them into a comprehensive list for each category, with the Bible verses printed out in full.

Proverbs 1:1-9:18 sets forth the absolute importance of wisdom. God’s place in wisdom teaching is emphasized more here at the beginning of the book (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 2:6; Prov. 3:5-12; Prov. 3:19; Prov. 3:26; Prov. 5:21; Prov. 6:16-19; Prov. 8:22-34; Prov. 9:10-11). In place of two or four-line proverbs, the teaching on various themes is more like short essays:

The author’s aim is to paint the strongest possible contrast between the results of seeking wisdom and living a life of folly. He sets the stage for the several hundred specific proverbs which follow. Certain temptations loom large in the sage’s mind: crimes of violence (Prov. 1:10-19; Prov. 4:14-19); the binding of oneself by a rash pledge (Prov. 6:1-5); sloth (Prov. 6:6-11); duplicity (Prov. 6:12-15); and especially sexual impurity (Prov. 2:16-19; Prov. 5:3-20; Prov. 6:23-35; Prov. 7:4-27; Prov. 9:13-18). To the one who avoids these snares, Wisdom offers happiness, long life, wealth and honour (Prov. 3:13-18). The deeply religious nature of this section (e.g., Prov. 1:7; Prov. 3:5-12), its sensitive moral tone and its hortatory, didactic style are reminiscent of Deuteronomy.⁵³

Proverbs 10:1-22:16 contains the first collection of what we commonly style “two-line” proverbs. There are some 375 proverbs; these vary between **synonymous**, **antithetic** and **synthetic** styles. Proverbs 10-15 are mostly antithetic while Proverbs 16-22 are mainly synthetic or synonymous.⁵⁴ Perhaps the most distinctive element in Hebrew poetry is parallelism of thought. There are no systematic attempts to group proverbs in this

section by topics. The different types of parallelism are discussed below.

Synonymous parallelism is used when the first line of a verse has word or thought parallels in the second line: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10, ASV).

Antithetic parallelism contrasts the first line with an opposite thought in the second line: “A talebearer beareth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter” (Prov. 11:13).

Synthetic parallelism, sometimes called “constructive,” is generally “used to describe all poetry not decisively synonymous or antithetic. Here the second line expands or amplifies [the thought of] the first line”⁵⁵: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). Some proverbs in synthetic form are comparisons: “It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house” (Prov. 21:9). At times the synthetic form extends to four or more lines:

Enter not into the path of the wicked,
and **go not** in the way of evil men.
Avoid it, pass by it,
Turn from it, and pass away (Prov. 4:14-15).

“**Emblematic** parallelism uses simile or metaphor to convey poetic meaning. One line expresses a thought in a literal manner, while the other line repeats or builds on it in figurative terms.”⁵⁶ Proverbs 25:25 says, “As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.” **Chiastic** parallelism reverses the general word order from the first to the second line: “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go” (Prov. 22:24).

Though a religious note is by no means absent (cf. Prov. 15:3; Prov. 15:8-9; Prov. 15:11; Prov. 16:1-9, etc.), the bulk of the proverbs contain no specific reference to Israel's faith but are based on practical observations of everyday life. The extremely practical nature of the instruction which stresses the profits of wisdom has drawn the criticism of those who hold that pure religion should be disinterested. But how would a practical sage to whom God had not yet revealed the mystery of life after death make the issues clear without pointing out the blessings of the wise and the pitfalls of the fool?⁵⁷

Proverbs 22:17-24 and Proverbs 24:23-34 contain a variety of poetic forms described above in two-line and four-line styles. The themes are also assorted.

Proverbs 25:1-29:27 constitutes the collection of Solomon's proverbs by the scribes of King Hezekiah's court, which they copied from other records, perhaps from royal archives of Judah's kings. Some themes include conduct before kings (Prov. 25:8-28), folly of a fool (Prov. 26:1-12), the sluggard (Prov. 26:13-16), the busybody and the gossiper (Prov. 26:17-28), the value of looking after flocks (Prov. 27:23-27), law and justice (Prov. 28:1-13), and wise leadership (Prov. 28:15-16). Proverbs 29, as well as verses between the sections just listed, are disconnected proverbs on a multitude of subjects. Proverbs 30 and 31 were previously discussed as to their structure and place in the book.

We offer two final thoughts regarding the structure and poetic forms of Proverbs: Proverbs 30:7-9 and Proverbs 30:15-31 follow a numerical formula in presenting their lessons (cf. Prov. 6:16-19). These proverbs use the same rhetorical device as "for three transgressions... and for four" of Amos 1-2. The numbers advance higher to stimulate the awareness of the listener/reader and increase the importance and scope of the topic covered. Finally, think

of the imagery used in poets' texts and how it serves to conserve the writer's task of description:

Imagery is a concise way of writing because it simultaneously conveys information and evokes an emotional response. Pages of prose texts might be required to explain one simple line of poetic imagery such as 'Yahweh is my shepherd.' Imagery stimulates imagination.⁵⁸

Picture the sluggard turning back and forth in his bed as a door that swings back and forth on its hinges (Prov. 26:14), or "The lazy man [who] buries his hand in the bowl; [but] it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth" (Prov. 26:15, NKJV). There are multitudes of other images that paint moving pictures in our minds.

Addressees Of Proverbs

The same Hebrew word generally translated "son" (*ben*, Strong's #1121) is also frequently translated "children." Wise men involved in the business of teaching wisdom to others frequently called their male students "son." Many believe that Proverbs was exclusively written to instruct a special class of boys or young men who would later serve in leadership in government and that women were excluded from wisdom training.⁵⁹ This is far too narrow of a field for instructions in Proverbs. Even if these types of proverbs were originally used in such settings, it is obvious that Solomon is promoting a wider audience:

In ancient Israel some people devoted themselves not only to gaining wisdom, but also to teaching others how to gain it. These wisdom instructors were simply called "wise men," though they eventually occupied a position in Israelite society somewhat parallel to that of the priest and the prophet (Jer. 18:18). This special class of wise men and women arose at least as early as the beginning of the kingship period in

Israel (i.e., about 1000 B.C.; cf. 1 Sam. 14:2), and functioned as teacher-counselors to those who sought their wisdom. Some were inspired by God to help write portions of the Old Testament. We note that the wise person served as a sort of substitute parent to the person seeking wisdom from him or her. Even before the exodus, Joseph was made by God a “father” to Pharaoh (Gen. 45:8), and later the prophetess Deborah is called a “mother” in Israel (Judg. 5:7). Thus often in the Book of Proverbs we see the wise teacher addressing his or her pupil as “my child” (“my son” is not the best translation). Parents sent their children to be educated in wisdom attitudes and lifestyles from such wisdom teachers, and these teachers taught their pupils as they would their own children.⁶⁰

The very first proverb after the introductory verses (Prov. 1:1-7) is, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (cf. Prov. 6:20). If these proverbs were intended for such a school as is often suggested, it is not likely mothers would be recommended as counselors in training schools. Even grandparents come into the picture in Proverbs 4:3-4 and Proverbs 17:6:

Not only in these early chapters but in every section of the book it is assumed that truth is to be learnt [sic] first at home, instilled there with firmness and affection as lessons for the mind and training for the character.⁶¹

Wisdom is not a boy’s or man’s club sort of thing—everyone needs it to be wise unto God. Solomon was trying to reach the “national character” of Israel with his wisdom. This is a family affair; first on the level of each individual family, then on the broader scale of each wisdom learner being a humble instructor of others. Both parents are essential in wisdom training. Wisdom training was to have a “trickle down” effect, from God to His prophets, priests, and wise men, to the nation, to the parents, to the children. Since

wisdom is seen first in one's proper "fear of the Lord," how could anyone be exempt?

The mother's teaching influence in Israel extended beyond the small children, as the extensive teaching of King Lemuel's mother shows. A woman's teaching a king is most remarkable. No other instructions by women survive in ANE literature. "Son" is not in marked opposition to "daughter." In order for faithful instruction to be on the mother's tongue (Prov. 31:26) she herself must first be taught.

The son is singled out because by nature he is most tempted to stray from the inherited tradition. Follis (178) notes: "Sons commonly are thought to represent the adventuresome spirit of a society, constantly pressing beyond established boundaries, at the outmost part, the circumference, of the community. Daughters, on the other hand, have been associated with stability, with the building up of society, with nurturing the community at its heart and center." Furthermore, the son will inherit the primary responsibility for his own household's spiritual identity (cf. Num. 30; Prov. 4:3-4). The daughter was expected to follow her husband's lead.⁶²

In addition to the home, settings for wisdom instruction were community life; the judgments and decisions at the city gate, where lower court proceedings and business deals often took place; and the royal court of the king, where national and international decisions were made. There are dozens of proverbs that relate to all these areas for the teaching and practice of wisdom.

Personification Of Wisdom And Folly

Personification is attributing human personal characteristics (such as seeing, hearing, thinking, loving, hating, etc.) to impersonal, inanimate, or abstract objects.

Wisdom is personified in Proverbs by claiming for it a number of such personal, human characteristics (Prov. 1:20-33; Prov. 3:13-20; Prov. 8:1-9:6):

The personification of wisdom in chapters 8-9 constitutes another dimension of wisdom in Proverbs. Although the descriptions in Proverbs 1:20-22 and Proverbs 2-3 may be largely metaphorical, as in Job 28, in Proverbs 8-9 wisdom is personified as a woman who speaks, offers wealth and prosperity to her devotees (Prov. 8:18; Prov. 8:21), witnesses of her existence before the creation of the world (Prov. 8:22-23; see p. 171 for meaning of Prov. 8:22), assists the Lord in creation (Prov. 8:30), and possesses a house and servants (Prov. 9:1-6). Yet wisdom does not have the ontological distinction that it has in the Wisdom of Solomon or that the Logos (Word) has in John's gospel. The purpose of personification in this instance is to help us understand God by abstracting one of His attributes and endowing it with personality and consciousness. The author wants to teach that wisdom is a divine attribute that is eternally related to Him, understood only in relation to Him, and is an extension of His dynamic Being to mankind. The method of personification is the means by which the practical perspective of wisdom is connected to God. It is the closest thing wisdom has to the prophetic formula "Thus says the Lord." By means of personified wisdom, the knowledge of God's nature is delivered to and integrated with the everyday life of men and women.⁶³

One interesting aspect of this matter is the proper rendering of the Hebrew word *qanah*, which in the KJV of Proverbs 8:22 is translated "possessed," stating that wisdom is a characteristic from eternity. Most translations since the RSV have favored the word "created me" (RSV, NRSV); "possessed me" (1st edition NIV); then, "brought me forth" (NIV); "formed me" (TLB); or "fathered me" (ESV footnote). "Possessed me" is used by the KJV, ASV, NKJV, NASB and ESV (in text).

Because some have taught that wisdom in Proverbs 8 et al. refers to Christ, they have objected strongly to the translation “created me” in Proverbs 8:22. They argue that this would make Christ a part of God’s creation and not a member of the Godhead itself. Christ is denied equality with the Father in the teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses; the Mormons; and others who deny the Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, the word “possessed” presents problems too, for it has to do with “acquiring” wisdom.⁶⁴ If God literally had to “acquire” wisdom in order to “possess” it, then wisdom would not be one of His infinite, eternal attributes, and it would had to have existed before God did.

The answer to these supposed problems is that personification is **figurative** language, not literal, and therefore cannot be stretched to prove that Christ was created nor that God literally had to acquire wisdom. In Proverbs wisdom is personified as Lady Wisdom and not a male personage, as Christ is depicted throughout Scripture. Many such mistakes occur when students of the Bible misapply the poetic, figurative language of the Hebrew writers. The point of this personification is that true wisdom has always come from the eternal God Almighty, and the type of wisdom God calls on man to acquire comes first and only from Him (Prov. 2:6; Prov. 3:5-6; et al.).

Jesus Christ is God, and He is Creator of all (John 1:1; John 1:18; Col. 1:16-17). Christ is wisdom, and in Him “are hid **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:3). All of that is said about Christ, as it could equally be said of the Father or Holy Spirit, because all are part of the Godhead wherein absolute wisdom resides. Accordingly, whatever the personified Lady Wisdom (a figurative presentation) is spoken of as being “possessed” (acquired) by God or “created” by God has no

impact against Christ being a Member of the eternal, infinite Godhead:

Personified wisdom focuses on God's involvement with the world: wisdom is involved with divine creative activity (Job 28:24-27); wisdom is the firstborn of creation (Prov. 8:22-31); wisdom was present when God made the world (Prov. 8:27-30); God founded the earth by wisdom (Prov. 3:19; Prov.8:30). This divine wisdom, sometimes called "Lady Wisdom," is not to be understood as a hypostasis, that is, an intermediary being between God and creation (H. Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*), since wisdom is not given the status of an independent entity—the figure of wisdom is a vivid poetic personification.⁶⁵

Smith notes that, if "created" is the proper reading in Proverbs 8:22, it is the exception in the book, for the verb *qanah* elsewhere in Proverbs always means "to possess."⁶⁶

Lady Folly is also personified in Proverbs as the opposite of Lady Wisdom. This is another distinction of the material in Proverbs 1-9:

Images of the foolish woman bear messages relating to sexual misconduct [Prov. 2:16-19; Prov. 5:3-20; Prov. 6:23-35; Prov. 7:6-27; Prov. 9:13-18]. [Lady] Wisdom represents the chaste and faithful lifestyle...[T]he adulterous woman, in addition to her role as a symbol of sexual misconduct, also represents the waste and danger of a life without wisdom. Part of the basis for the portrayal of wisdom and folly as women lies in the feminine gender of the noun for wisdom (...*hokma*). More important than this, the youth and inexperience of the male students presumed by Proverbs 1-9 called for such images...The final unit, Proverbs 9:13-18, contains only a vague allusion to sexual misconduct: "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (Prov. 9:17). "The foolish woman" speaks these lines. This character serves as a metaphor for the

destructive lifestyle of the fool. Illicit sexual conduct with its dangers and consequences makes the immoral woman the logical choice for the image of Folly.⁶⁷

Four women stand out in the Proverbs: (1) the mother whose instruction will guide her children wisely; (2) the personified Madam Folly, who seeks to ruin the lives and souls of men; (3) Lady Wisdom, who will protect us and lead us to greater life; and (4) the worthy wife who fears the Lord and makes her husband proud. Ladies, who would you want to imitate? Gentlemen, with whom would you rather keep company?

The Theology Of Proverbs

First and foremost, Proverbs is grounded in the wisdom that begins with “the fear of the Lord” (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 9:10; et al.). See the section on this earlier in the manuscript.

Second, the doctrine that there are only two ways from which one might choose a course of life is made abundantly clear throughout the book of Proverbs:

Indeed, to the scandal of the sophisticated, one of the hallmarks of this wisdom teaching is the insistence that between right and wrong there is no middle way. Somewhere between the two—that is, between the fear of the Lord and any alternative—there may seem to be a reasonable compromise, “a way which seems right to a man”; but Proverbs, like Psalm 1 or the Sermon on the Mount (e.g. Matt. 7:13ff.), will have none of it. ‘Its end is the way to death’ (Prov. 14:12).⁶⁸

The two ways are illustrated by contrasting word pairs throughout the book, such as wise and foolish (Prov. 13:20), righteous and wicked (Prov. 11:23), wealth and poverty (Prov. 22:16), industry and laziness (Prov. 12:24), gladness and sorrow (Prov. 10:1), pride and humility (Prov. 29:23),

obedience and rebellion (Prov. 10:8), life and death (Prov. 11:19), and others. See especially Proverbs 28-29. There are more comparisons between the wise and foolish than any other category.

Third, the doctrine of retribution is also a major theme in Proverbs, comprising about one-fourth of the sayings. "Retribution" is the concept of rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked:

This theory is explicitly formulated in Proverbs 1-9 in connection with the two ways (e.g., Prov. 1:19; Prov. 1:31; Prov. 2:20-22; Prov. 3:23-26; Prov. 3:33-35; Prov. 4:18-19) and is also reiterated in the proverbial sayings, esp. in those on the righteous and the wicked. Since life and death have a pregnant sense, a corresponding variety of rewards lies in store for the righteous and punishments for the wicked. Within the book retribution is viewed as part of the natural order: the good or bad consequences inherent in the acts themselves, and so a reaping of what has been sown (Prov. 1:31-32; Prov. 5:22; cf. Prov. 14:14; Prov. 22:8; Prov. 26:27). At the same time, God is also viewed as actively upholding [H]is moral order by rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked (Prov. 3:33; Prov. 5:21; cf. Prov. 10:3; Prov. 10:29; Prov. 12:2; Prov. 14:9).

The doctrine of retribution has a central place within the theology of covenant and law (cf. esp. the covenant curses and blessings, Deut. 28) and is applied to Israel's national life by the prophets. However, its application to the individual raised problems (cf. Ezek. 18; John 9:1-3), which Proverbs only fleetingly acknowledges. The book recognizes that sometimes the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, but simply counsels patience. The prosperity of the wicked is insubstantial, and sooner or later they will be snuffed out like a lamp (Prov. 24:19-20), while the righteous will always rise and flourish again (Prov. 24:16).⁶⁹

There is a danger of wanting to absolutize the Proverbs in a way that allows for no variation from the

saying being considered. To do so is to misunderstand the meaning and purposes of a proverb. A little reflective thinking will show this to be true. Is it always true that the wicked suffer more than the righteous in this life? Job would not agree, and surely you can think of a righteous person who now suffers more than a wicked person you know. Do the righteous always prosper more on earth than the wicked? Think of your finances contrasted with the white-collar Wall Street crooks who stole millions and are walking free and living easy:

Individual proverbs should not be absolutized. The proverbs should be regarded as observations, not guarantees. Proverbs are not promises; they are generalizations of how things usually work out. Some of the proverbs are true only in certain situations. Only one who is wise will know the situation in which a particular proverb applies. Should one “answer a fool according to his folly” (Prov. 26:5) or not (Prov. 26:4)? A wise person will know when to apply each of these side-by-side verses.

Much harm is done when this principle is ignored. Many parents go to their grave thinking they have failed in parenting because they have heard Prov. 22:6 absolutized: “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Are there no exceptions to this principle? Of course there are. Proverbs itself recognizes the exceptions in its numerous allusions to the foolish son.⁷⁰

Some Scriptures modify one another, just as the freewill actions of others sometimes modify ours. By its brief nature, a proverb cannot discuss all the possibilities that bear upon the topic it presents for thought. That is where the “thought” comes in! Also, one proverb may show that another cannot be absolute. One proverb may be limited by another, or by teaching elsewhere in Scripture.

For example, Proverbs 22:6 says that, if we train up a child in the way he should go, he will not depart from it. However, Proverbs 19:27 teaches, “Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge (NKJV).

Consider Proverbs 16:3: “Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established”. This is indicative of the proverb—a short statement with a direct point. But will God “establish” every thought we commit to Him so that we will always succeed? James 4:13-15 tells us that it isn’t just our thoughts that matter, but particularly what is the Lord’s will! Think of all the righteous people who have been killed by the wicked, including our Righteous Lord and His apostles. These problems and calamities in life do not argue against the intended truthfulness of the Proverbs, but help us to put Proverbs and all Scripture in proper perspective.

The fear of God and living by His revealed Word still are the very best possible ways to live and to have blessings, here and hereafter (Mark 10:28-30; 1 Tim. 4:7-8).

Proverbs In The New Testament

Although the list varies according to what one believes to constitute a quotation, Ross listed ten quotes from Proverbs in the NT: (1) Proverbs 1:16 in Romans 3:15; (2) Proverbs 3:7 in Romans 12:16; (3) Proverbs 25:21-22 in Romans 12:20; (4) Proverbs 3:11-12 in Hebrews 12:5-6; (5) Proverbs 3:34 in James 4:6; (6) Proverbs 27:1 in James 4:13; (7) Proverbs 24:21 in 1 Peter 2:17; (8) Proverbs 10:12 in 1 Peter 4:8; (9) Proverbs 11:31 in 1 Peter 4:18; and (10) Proverbs 26:11 in 2 Peter 2:22.⁷¹

The quotes from Proverbs 3:11-12; Proverbs 3:34; Proverbs 11:31; and Proverbs 25:21-22 are listed as being quoted from the Greek Septuagint (LXX), the OT in Greek.⁷²

Guidelines For Understanding Proverbs

Based on what we have already presented, we offer some guidelines for understanding the Proverbs.⁷³

First, interpret individual passages in light of the overall structures, purpose, and “motto” of Proverbs. Second, try to recognize the different literary forms of the individual passages for clues in interpreting them. These were listed in the section on the structure of proverbs and involve the different types of parallelism. Third, be on guard against the assumption that proverbs are unconditional promises. Many are not. Fourth, there are some proverbs that are unconditionally true, usually those matters connected to an action or attribute of God. In thinking about guidelines 3 and 4, always compare any proverb (or any verse of Scripture) with whatever else the Bible says on the subject. Psalm 119:160 says, “The sum of thy word is truth” (ASV). Add up everything that God has to say on any subject. Otherwise, you may miss something that will hinder you from knowing the truth. Fifth, interpret the Bible in the historical-cultural context of the time it was written, during the reign of Solomon. As you seek to make application to your life today in the 21st century, **think** of how these teachings apply to your daily life.

I strongly recommend that you read Proverbs from several different standard versions of the Bible. Understanding of the Hebrew text of the OT has improved considerably since the KJV was first published and this can be seen in the clearer presentation of the meaning of some proverbs in some later versions. I believe your understanding will be enhanced and that you will not be led astray by studying the Proverbs from the American Standard Version, the New King James Version and the New American Standard Bible. In preparing for this lesson and comparing these versions with one another, I

frequently was aided by such a comparison. I do not say that necessarily would be true for other parts of the OT or for NT study.

Exegesis Of Proverbs 1:1-7

Proverbs 1:1 has already been discussed thoroughly in the bulk of our previous material. This verse provides the title for the whole book, “The proverbs of Solomon,” which we believe he wrote, although commonly today he is assigned only Proverbs 10:1-22:16. Solomon’s credentials as a wise man, able to impart God-given wisdom to others, is well documented in Scripture (1 Kings 4:29-34; 1 Kings 10:1-10).

Proverbs 1:2 begins the explanation of the **purpose** for writing the book. Solomon desires that students in his world wisdom class develop, first, wisdom,

the ability to make wise choices and live successfully according to the moral standards of the covenant community. The one who lives skillfully [in wisdom] produces things of lasting value to God and to the community.⁷⁴

Second, the purpose of Proverbs is to bring “instruction,” which includes “chastisement, correction, education and moral training.”⁷⁵ To “perceive” (KJV) is to “discern” (ASV), which relates to the ability to see and distinguish the differences between things and have the basis upon which to make proper choices from the “words of understanding” presented by wisdom teachers.

Proverbs 1:3 calls for the student to receive “the instruction of wisdom,” meaning “a discipline full of insight, discernment or thoughtfulness.”⁷⁶ There must be teaching on “justice” (KJV) or “righteousness” (ASV), conformity to God’s standards of right and wrong (cf. Prov. 3:5-6; Jer. 10:23). “Judgment” refers to having the training to make proper judgments on the actions we contemplate

and those of others. “Equity” relates to what is right and pleasing, uprightness in thoughts and actions, fairness.⁷⁷

Proverbs 1:4 makes it clear that proverbs will help provide “subtlety” (KJV), “prudence” (ASV) to the simple. Prudence is the ability to govern one’s conduct by properly reasoning, shrewdness to foresee evil and to prepare for it.⁷⁸ The “simple” are not witless beings, but those who are easily influenced by others to do wrong, the gullible and naive (Prov. 9:4; Prov. 9:16; Prov. 14:15). Further the wisdom teacher strives to give the “young man,” the immature mind, undeveloped in wisdom, both “knowledge and discretion.” The term here for “knowledge” means teaching of good and evil, the “two ways” of teaching found in Proverbs. Discretion refers to being cautious, on guard against deception and potential difficulties.⁷⁹

Proverbs 1:5 challenges those who think they are wise, or those who are wise, to hear, listen, and increase the knowledge they already have. If a wise man hears in order to learn more, those who refuse to hear already show themselves unwise. This openness to learning should characterize all of God’s children. If we think we have nothing left to learn, we are not very wise. The wise man who hears is parallel to the man of understanding who “attains unto wise counsels,” who will listen to his counselors. The Hebrew phrase “is derived from the navigational mechanism of a ship,” suggesting the wise counsels one receives are able guides and direct one’s proper course of life.⁸⁰

Proverbs 1:6 is a synonymous parallelism. Line 1: **To understand** a proverb, and the interpretation. Line 2: the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. “To understand” leads the thought of the verse, with “a proverb” corresponding to the “words of the wise,” and the “interpretation” paralleling “their dark sayings.”⁸¹ The proverbs were figures of speech with meanings not always

obvious on the surface, like the parables of our Lord were said to be (Matt. 13:10-17). Proverbs required thoughtful interpretation, and the words of the wise were often like dark sayings that needed to be brought to light by the study of wisdom and application of its principles. The mere knowledge of the content of Proverbs does not mean much if there is not a constant process of thinking to make application in all the various ways that they might be able to be applied in just the course of one day or one encounter with another person.

Proverbs 1:7 has been discussed in detail in the section on WL vocabulary, but Ross summarizes a study on this phrase (See also Curtis Cates' fine lesson, "The Fear Of The Lord," elsewhere in this lectureship book.):

Reverential fear of the Lord is the prerequisite of knowledge. The term *yir'ah* can describe dread (Deut. 1:29), being terrified (Jonah 1:10), standing in awe (1 Kings 3:28), or having reverence (Lev. 19:3). With the Lord as the object, *yir'ah* captures both aspects of shrinking back in fear and of drawing close in awe. It is not a trembling dread that paralyzes action, but neither is it a polite reverence (Plaut, 32). "The fear of the Lord" ultimately expresses reverential submission to the Lord's will and thus characterizes a true worshiper. In this context it is the first and controlling principle of knowledge. Elsewhere in Proverbs the fear of the Lord is the foundation for wisdom (Prov. 9:10) or the discipline leading to wisdom (Prov. 15:33); it is expressed in hatred of evil (Prov. 8:13), and it results in a prolonged life (Prov. 10:27).

On the other hand, fools disdain wisdom and discipline. Proverbs 1:7b is the antithesis of Proverbs 1:7a. The term *ewillim* ("fools") describes those who are thick-brained or stubborn (Greenstone, 6). They lack understanding (Prov. 10:21), do not store up knowledge (Prov. 10:14),

fail to attain wisdom (Prov. 24:7), talk loosely (Prov. 14:3), are filled with pride (Prov. 26:5), and are contentious (Prov. 20:3). They are morally unskilled and refuse any correction (Prov. 15:5; Prov. 27:22).

Fools are people who “despise” (*bazu*) wisdom, and discipline; they treat these virtues as worthless and contemptible. This attitude is illustrated in Genesis 25:34, where Esau despised the birthright, and in Nehemiah 4:4, where Sanballat and Tobiah belittled the Jews.⁸²

Conclusion

May God help us to seek and embrace wisdom in our relationships with Him and others, as we reject foolish and self-willed pursuits of worldly endeavors.

My further prayer is that this Introduction to Wisdom Literature and Proverbs, lengthy though it is, will help stimulate your desire to further investigate how God speaks to us through His Divine wisdom, and that a genuine and proper “fear of the Lord” will motivate you the rest of your years to make study in the wisdom literature of the Bible a part of your regular inquiry into God’s Word.

Endnotes

1 Frederick C. Mish, ed., **Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary**, 10th edition (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993), p. 1358.

2 All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version (hereafter KJV) of the Bible unless otherwise noted. Other version abbreviations are American Standard Version (ASV); New King James Version (NKJV); Revised Standard Version (RSV); New Revised Standard Version (NRSV); English Standard Version (ESV); New International Version (NIV).

3 Henry Morris, **The Genesis Record** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), p. 131.

4 Millard J. Erickson, **Christian Theology** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), pp. 275-276.

5 Donald K. Berry, **An Introduction to Wisdom And Poetry Of The Old Testament** (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), pp. 107-110, 211.

6 KJV, electronic version, (Biblesoft: PC Study Bible).

7 Ibid.

8 Andrew E. Hill & John H. Walton, **A Survey of the Old Testament** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), p. 256.

9 Ibid, pp. 256-257.

10 For several of the basic words and definitions in this section I am indebted to: Eldon G. Woodcock, "Basic Terminology Of Wisdom, Folly, Righteousness And Wickedness," **Learning From The Sages—Selected Studies in Proverbs**, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), pp. 111-124.

11 Ibid, p. 116.

12 Ibid, p. 117.

13 Ibid, p. 118.

14 Hill & Walton, p. 257.

15 M. V. Van Pelt & Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "yr' I," **The New International Dictionary Of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis**, Volume 2, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), p. 528. Hereafter this resource is abbreviated as **NIDOTTE**.

16 Hill & Walton, p. 259.

17 Ibid, pp. 19-20.

18 Bruce Waltke, "The Book of Proverbs And Ancient Wisdom Literature," **Bibliotheca Sacra**, Volume 136, #543, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, July 1979), pp. 223-224.

19 Roland E. Murphy, "Proverbs," **Word Biblical Commentary**, ed., Bruce Metzger (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), pp. Xxvii-xxviii, 287-290.

20 John Ruffle, "The Teaching of Amenemope and Its Connection with the Book of Proverbs," **Learning From The Sages**, pp. 299-316.

21 John Walton, **Ancient Israelite Literature In Its Cultural Context** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), p. 174.

22 Downloaded copy from web site <<http://www.touregypt.net/instructionofamenemope.htm>>

23 R. K. Harrison, **Introduction To The Old Testament** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 1015.

24 Charles T. Fritsch, "The Book of Proverbs," **The Interpreter's Bible**, Volume 4, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), pp. 768-769. Mr. Fritsch did not provide chapter and line numbers from his translation of Amenemope. I have not provided them because they vary according to the translation.

25 Ruffle, p. 294.

26 See John Walton, **Ancient Israelite Literature In Its Cultural Context** for examples of the literature of such nations.

27 P. J. Wiseman, **Ancient Records And The Structure Of Genesis**, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Nashville: Nelson, 1985). Wiseman gives an excellent and convincing treatment and suggests that God may have inspired Moses to make use of these records in writing Genesis.

28 Ruffle, pp. 300, 306.

29 Herman J. Austel, "shalishim," **Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament**, Volume 2, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., & Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), pp. 933-934.

30 Harrison, p. 1015.

31 Ruffle, p. 320.

32 Walton, pp. 194-195.

33 Hill & Walton, p. 256.

34 Norman L. Geisler & William E. Nix, **A General Introduction To The Bible** (Chicago: Moody Press, revised and expanded 1986), pp. 264-275. The book gives several reasons why apocryphal books are to be excluded from the Biblical canon.

35 See any standard Catholic Bible, such as the New American Bible. Some non-Catholic Bibles such as the New Revised Standard Version have editions where the Apocrypha are included.

36 Geisler & Nix, p. 266; David A. deSilva, **Introducing the Apocrypha** (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), pp. 132-133.

37 deSilva, pp. 157-158; C. Hassell Bullock, **An Introduction To The Old Testament Poetic Books** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), p. 49.

38 Lawrence Boadt, **Reading The Old Testament: An Introduction** (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), p. 488.

39 Ibid, pp. 486-487.

40 deSilva, p. 26.

41 Hans G. Conzelmann, "Wisdom in the New Testament," **The Interpreter's Dictionary Of The Bible**, Supplemental volume, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 957.

42 Frank E. Gaebelin, "Proverb," **The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible**, Volume 4, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, 1976), p. 914.

43 Bullock, p. 149.

44 Gleason L. Archer, Jr., **Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 251.

45 Ibid.

46 Bullock, p. 156.

47 Kenneth Kitchen, **Ancient Orient And Old Testament** (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1966), pp. 26-27, 126-127.

-
- 48 Gleason L. Archer, **A Survey Of Old Testament Introduction** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 478.
- 49 John Phillips, **Exploring Proverbs**, Volume 2 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), pp. 540-541.
- 50 Ibid., pp. 586-587, 589.
- 51 James E. Smith, **The Wisdom Literature And Psalms** (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), p. 462.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 462-463; Bullock, p. 159.
- 53 Hubbard, "Proverbs, Book of," **New Bible Dictionary**, electronic version (Libronix Library System).
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Smith, pp. 15-16.
- 56 Hill & Walton, p. 253.
- 57 Hubbard.
- 58 Smith, p. 18.
- 59 S. H. Blank, "Proverbs, Book of," **The Interpreter's Dictionary Of The Bible**, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 939.
- 60 Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, **How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 189-190.
- 61 Derek Kidner, **The Wisdom Of Proverbs, Job, And Ecclesiastes** (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), pp. 19-20.
- 62 Bruce K. Waltke, **NIDOTTE**, p. 1085.
- 63 Bullock, p. 148.
- 64 Leonard J. Coppes, "*qana*," **Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament**, Volume 2, pp. 803-804.
- 65 T. D. Alexander & B. S. Rosner, **New Dictionary Of Biblical Theology**, electronic edition (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001).
- 66 Smith, pp. 524-525.
- 67 Berry, pp. 129-130.
- 68 Kidner, pp. 30-31.
- 69 Kenneth T. Aitken, "Proverbs, Sayings and Themes," **NIDOTTE**, Volume 4, pp. 1097-1098.
- 70 Smith, pp. 470-471.
- 71 Ross, p. 44.
- 72 Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce Metzger, & Allen Wikgren, eds., **The Greek New Testament**, 3rd edition (West Germany: United Bible Societies, 1983), p. 898. They also list 53 references in the NT they believe are allusions to verses in Proverbs, p. 906.
- 73 The material in this section is based in part on: Greg W. Parsons, "Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming the Book of Proverbs," **Learning From The Sages**, pp. 151-168.
-

- 74 Allen P. Ross, "Proverbs 1:1-19," **Learning From The Sages**, p. 172.
75 Smith, p. 468.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid; Ross, "Proverbs 1:1-19," p. 173.
78 Ross, "Proverbs 1:1-19," p. 174.
79 Smith, p. 468.
80 Ibid; Ross, "Proverbs 1:1-19," p. 174.
81 Clyde M. Miller, "Types of Old Testament Literature," **The World And Literature Of The Old Testament**, ed. John T. Willis (Austin, TX: Sweet, 1979), p. 205.
82 Ross, "Proverbs 1:1-19," p. 175.



About The Author

Native of Illinois. Married to Sherrie (Mooney), 3 children, 7 grandchildren. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching; Alabama Christian School of Religion (B.A.); graduate work at ACSR, Harding Graduate School of Religion. Local preaching: IL, MO, IN, AL, AR. Gospel meetings in 13 states, Jamaica. Debater. Editor, *Fulton County Gospel News*. Local Preacher, Mammoth Spring, AR since 1991.

Wisdom Texts in the Hebrew Bible

Genesis	3:1-7; 37-50
Exodus	1:8-2:14; 7:11; 18:13-27; 28:3; 31:3; 35:31-39:31
Deuteronomy	1:13, 15; 6:1-25; 32:1-47
Joshua	1:8,
1 Samuel	25:2-42
2 Samuel	9-20,
1 Kings	1-2; 3:1-12; 15
Isaiah	1:2-3, 26; 3:2-3; 5:20-21, 24; 8:9-10; 10:13-15; 19:11-15; 26; 28:23-29; 29:13-16; 32:5-8; 40:12-41:1; 42:5; 44:9-20; 44:24-26; 45:9-23; 46; 48:13; 53:11; 61:11; 65:6-7
Jeremiah	4:22; 5:3, 20-29; 7:28; 8:4-9; 9:12, 23-24; 10:1-16, 23-24; 12:1-4; 13:12-14; 17:5-11, 23; 18:18-23; 20:7-18; 23:18-22; 31:35-37; 49:7; 50:35-36.
Ezekiel	12:21-25; 15:2-8; 16:44-63; 17:2-10; 18:2-30; 20:49; 28:2-19
Hosea	4:11, 14; 9:7; 14:9 (14:10 Hebrew)
Amos	3:3-8; 5:8-15; 9:2-6
Obadiah	8,
Habakkuk	1:1-2:5; 3
Malachi	1:6; 2:6-9
Psalms	1; 9:1-10:18; 14 and 53; 19:7-13; 36; 37; 49; 73; 112; 119; 127; 128; 144:3-4
Job	(entirety)
Proverbs	(entirety)
Ecclesiastes	(entirety)
Lamentations	3:37-45
Esther	1:13-20
Daniel	1:3-5, 17, 20; 2:12, 20-23, 25-30; 9:22; 12:3
2 Chronicles	1:10-12; 9:1-9, 22-23
Sirach*	(entirety)
The Wisdom of Solomon*	(entirety)
*Deuterocanon works	

CHAPTER 2

Wisdom In Proverbs

B. J. Clarke

Introduction

S*AM FINDLEY DECIDED IT* was time to retire from the garment business. So he called in his son Mervyn and gave him the news and a bit of advice:

Son, it's all yours. I've made a success of this business because of two principles: reliability and wisdom. First, take reliability. If you promise goods by the tenth of the month, no matter what happens, you must deliver by the tenth. Even if it costs you overtime, double time, golden time. You deliver what you promise.

Mervyn thought about this for a few moments and then asked, "But what about wisdom?" His father shot back: "Wisdom is never making such a stupid promise."¹

Although wisdom involves much more than the avoidance of foolish promises, we certainly agree with Mr. Findley that wisdom is one of the keys to successful living. In fact, Mr. Findley was not the first father to remind his son of the importance of wisdom to successful living. Solomon was such a father, and he had received such instruction from his father. Accordingly, Solomon wrote:

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was

my father's son, tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother. **He taught me also**, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. **Get wisdom, get understanding**: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. **Wisdom *is* the principal thing; therefore get wisdom**: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her (Prov. 4:1-8, emp. mine throughout, BJC).

In this passage, Solomon affirms that his father (David) had taken the time to teach him the words and commandments of God. In so doing, David was observing the commandments which God had given to the children of Israel by the mouth and pen of Moses:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:6-9).

And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth (Deut. 11:19-21).

Apparently, the number one thing that David taught Solomon to do was to “Get wisdom, get understanding,”

and “forget it not” (Prov. 4:5). Having been taught repeatedly by his father that “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding” (Prov. 4:7), it is not surprising to read what Solomon did when God granted him the opportunity to ask for anything he desired. The episode is recorded in 1 Kings 3:5-9:

In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, **Ask what I shall give thee.** And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in. And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. **Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart** to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? (1 Kings 3:5-9).

Jehovah was quite pleased with Solomon’s unselfish request, and thus He responded:

Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I **have given thee a wise and an understanding heart**; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days (1 Kings 3:11-13).

It did not take long for Solomon to demonstrate that God had granted him with incredible wisdom. Two harlots came before Solomon, both claiming to have given birth to a particular child. In fact, they both had given birth, but each woman claimed that the other woman's child had died, and that she had switched her dead child with the other woman's living child. What a "she said," "she said," dilemma this was! How could Solomon possibly know which woman was telling the truth? The Scriptures reveal his amazing solution:

And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child *was* unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, *but* divide *it*. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she *is* the mother thereof (1 Kings 3:24-27).

Forget Sherlock Holmes, Perry Mason, and Columbo—Solomon really lived, and he was wiser than all of these fictional sleuths combined! Moreover, "all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for **they saw that the wisdom of God *was* in him, to do judgment**" (1 Kings 3:28).

This display of wisdom was by no means an isolated incident. The next chapter of the Divine Record reveals:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was

in all nations round about. And **he spake three thousand proverbs**: and his songs were a thousand and five (1 Kings 4:29-32).

The wisdom of Solomon was so noteworthy that “there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kings 4:34). In fact, “when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions” (1 Kings 10:1). Solomon answered every one of her “brain-teasers”—he was not stumped by anything that she asked him (1 Kings 10:3). By the time she had listened to all of his wisdom, and seen all of his riches, she could not help but exclaim:

It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*: and, behold, **the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard**. Happy are thy men, happy are these servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom (1 Kings 10:6-7).

Wouldn't it have been great to have been one of the witnesses to Solomon's great wisdom? If only we could have been there to hear some of that wisdom! There is good news—we can benefit from Solomon's God-given wisdom, because of the three thousand proverbs that “he spake,” approximately nine hundred of them are recorded in Holy Scripture. In fact, the book of Proverbs was written by Solomon for the express purpose of helping its readers “to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom” (Prov. 1:2-3). What does Solomon mean by “wisdom”? The reader should read the previous chapter and its introduction to Wisdom Literature for an extensive definition of wisdom.

For our purposes, we simply wish to point out that wisdom is more, much more, than the accumulation of

facts. In a New York Times article (Aug. 20, 1993), author Michiko Katkutani made an astute observation:

[T]he very amount of information that computers make available threatens us with cognitive overload: overwhelmed with facts, people tend to mistake data for truth, knowledge for wisdom. “Info-mania erodes our capacity for significance,” [Michael] Heim writes [in *The Metaphysics of Reality*], “With a mind-set fixed on information, our attention span shortens. We collect fragments. We become mentally poorer in overall meaning.”²

Knowing the Word of God is important, but applying that knowledge is even more important. The devil knows what the Word of God says (Matt. 4:1-11), but he has most certainly not applied said knowledge to his salvation. True wisdom is seeing things from God’s perspective insofar as He has revealed such:

Wisdom starts in heaven but works at street level, where we bump shoulders with others. It isn’t satisfied with information retrieval: You can’t access wisdom by the megabyte. Wisdom is concerned with how we relate to people, to the world, and to God.³

In this chapter we wish to investigate two main areas: (1) The Value of Wisdom; and (2) The Voice Of Wisdom.

The Value Of Wisdom

Indeed, in the text we noted earlier (Proverbs 4:1-8), Solomon encourages his readers to do the same thing his father David had encouraged him to do: “Get wisdom” (Prov. 4:5). The Hebrew word for “Get” is translated “Buy” in Proverbs 23:23, wherein we read: “Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.” If we would be wise, we must be willing to pay a price! Moreover, once we have made the sacrifices

necessary to obtain wisdom, we must cling to it, and never let it go!

Having said that, the reader will certainly agree that before we are motivated to “buy” something we must first be convinced of its value. Accordingly, Solomon often extols the value of wisdom in the book of Proverbs:

For the merchandise of it *is* **better than the merchandise of silver**, and the gain thereof **than fine gold**. She *is* **more precious than rubies**; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her (Prov. 3:14-15).

Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For **wisdom *is* better than rubies**; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it...My fruit *is* **better than gold, yea, than fine gold**; and my revenue **than choice silver** (Prov. 8:10-11; Prov. 8:19).

How much **better *is it* to get wisdom than gold!** and to get understanding rather to be chosen **than silver!** (Prov. 16:16).

When it comes to obtaining wisdom, we need to be like the men described in Matthew 13:44-46:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

The treasures and pearls of wisdom in the book of Proverbs are so priceless that we should be willing to sacrifice any and everything in order to possess them. This is precisely the reason why Solomon gave his “son” the following instructions:

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou **incline thine ear unto wisdom**, *and* apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou **seekest her as silver**, and **searchest for her as for hid treasures**; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For **the LORD giveth wisdom**: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding. He layeth up **sound wisdom** for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path (Prov. 2:1-9).

It is very telling to observe that Solomon does not tell his son “to talk out his problems, as in much of modern counseling; rather he should listen to the wise advice of others.”⁴ First, he should listen to the wise advice of his father and embed it in his heart. This theme is echoed elsewhere throughout the Proverbs (Prov. 1:8-9; Prov. 3:1-3; Prov. 5:1-2; Prov. 7:1-3; cf. Psm. 119:11). Second, Solomon exhorts the young man to search for wisdom as diligently as a miner would search for silver or hidden treasure.

The thing that makes this wisdom worth searching for is its source: “For the Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6). By himself, man could never originate true wisdom. Without the Lord, where could man go to find wisdom? The book of Job addresses this very issue. After affirming that man may dig and dig, and still never find true wisdom, Job asked: “Whence then *cometh* wisdom? And where is the place of understanding?...God understandeth the way whereof, and he knoweth the place thereof” (Job 28:20; Job 28:23). Speaking of the God of heaven, Daniel declared, “he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them

that know understanding” (Dan. 2:21). The Lord’s wisdom is not at all to be compared with the wisdom of this world (Prov. 19:21; Prov. 20:24; Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 1:18-31; 1 Cor. 3:18-21; Jas. 3:13-18). In contrast to worldly wisdom, the Lord’s wisdom is “sound wisdom” (Prov. 2:7).

The Voice Of Wisdom

Throughout the book of Proverbs (particularly in the first nine chapters), Wisdom is personified as a woman lifting up her voice and pleading for men to listen. The first thing of note is the **visibility** of her voice:

Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: **She crieth in the chief place of concourse**, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words (Prov. 1:20-21).

Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? **She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.** Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice *is* to the sons of man (Prov. 8:1-4).

Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: **she crieth upon the highest places of the city**, Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine *which* I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding (Prov. 9:1-6).

In this depiction we see that Wisdom is not holed up somewhere in a monastery. Rather, she is out among the people, wherever they might be. Whether it be in the streets, the chief place of concourse, at the gates leading

into the city, or in the highest places of the city, Wisdom is there to plead for the souls of men and women. However, she is not there alone in seeking the souls of men:

A foolish woman *is* clamorous: *she is* simple, and knoweth nothing. For she **sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, To call passengers who go right on their ways:** Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: and *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there; and *that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell (Prov. 9:13-18).

This passage reveals that another Woman is depicted in Proverbs, namely Folly, or the Foolish Woman. In the very same locations where the voice of Wisdom is sounded forth, you can be sure that Folly will be there too, attempting to draw men away from Wisdom. Since the Garden of Eden, there has always been a battle for the mind of man. Wisdom says one thing, Folly says another, and man must decide which voice he will answer. As was the case in the Garden, Folly has a way of making wrong things look so right (Gen. 3:1-6; Prov. 9:17).

Therefore, in an attempt to influence the simple-minded to change the course of their lives, Wisdom loudly proclaims the **veracity** of her words. Wisdom is not bashful to contrast her truthfulness with the veiled lies of the Foolish Woman. Wisdom cries out:

O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and **the opening of my lips shall be right things.** For **my mouth shall speak truth;** and wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips. **All the words of my mouth are in righteousness;** *there is* nothing froward or perverse in them. They *are* all plain

to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge (Prov. 8:5-9).

Wisdom pleads with the simple ones to examine her résumé in order to verify her superiority over Folly:

I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom: **I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, *even* all the judges of the earth** (Prov. 8:12-16).

The best kings and kingdoms in history have been founded upon the principles of wisdom—not of foolishness. Moreover, Wisdom’s greatest vindication comes not from her association with the kings of this earth, but from her perpetual residency with the LORD:

The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. **I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.** When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. **When he prepared the heavens, I was there:** when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: **Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight,** rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men (Prov. 8:22-31; cf. Prov. 3:19-20).

Since it is inconceivable that God could exist without possessing wisdom, and since God is eternal (Deut. 33:27; Psm. 90:2), it is apparent that wisdom has existed as long as God has existed. Wisdom existed before the world did, and will exist after the world has been annihilated (2 Pet. 3:10). Wisdom is eternal because it is an inherent part of the nature of God. Foolishness, on the other hand, has not always existed, and was not instrumental in the creation of the world. It was Satan who introduced foolishness into this world, and it will live with him throughout all eternity.

The voice of Wisdom is also vigilant to remind the foolish of the **vanity** of following after Folly. Wisdom says to the simple:

How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; **But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:** I also will laugh at your calamity; **I will mock when your fear cometh;** When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. **Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:** For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: **they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,** and be filled with their own devices. **For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them** (Prov. 1:22-32).

Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding (Prov. 9:6).

Wisdom warns the foolish that they may have the free moral agency to reject her, though they will also pay the price for so doing. Furthermore, they should recognize that the time to listen to Wisdom is now—tomorrow may be too late! One cannot despise the ways of wisdom in this life, and then expect to live with the All-Wise Jehovah in the next life.

The fool is so wrapped up in himself that he separates himself from the very instruction that would save him. He has no interest in getting wisdom (Prov. 17:16). His mind is always wandering elsewhere than where wisdom can be found (Prov. 17:24). Besides, the fool's greatest delight is to contemplate his own self-proclaimed wisdom (Prov. 18:1-2; cf. Prov. 15:21). Consequently, when intelligent discussion takes place in his presence, he is often dumbfounded (Prov. 24:7). Because he is void of the knowledge and wisdom of God, his feet are swift to run to that which is evil (Prov. 19:2). However wise he may consider himself to be, he needs to grasp that "there is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord" (Prov. 21:30); to think otherwise is vain and proud. The Lord hates pride and arrogance (Prov. 8:13). Therefore, we must humble ourselves and prepare our hearts to receive instruction in His Wisdom (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 9:10).

The voice of Wisdom also proclaims the **vantages** of following after her. Wisdom does not take without giving. We are promised that just as eating honey always brings a sweet taste, so, likewise, when we find wisdom "then there shall be a reward" (Prov. 24:13-14): "He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good" (Prov. 19:8). Indeed, when we "get wisdom" we get several fringe benefits in the transaction. Consider some of the vantages of wisdom.

1. It offers us quantity of life. Wisdom promises, "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and

shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Prov. 1:33). God “is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints” (Prov. 2:7-8; Prov. 4:6). When we allow Wisdom to govern us, we will follow the good path (Prov. 2:9). Allowing wisdom to enter into our hearts will cause us to exercise “discretion” (Prov. 2:10). This discretion will “deliver” us from the way of the evil man, and the strange woman, whose house leads to death (Prov. 2:11-22; cf. Prov. 22:3). Practicing wisdom can actually help to lengthen our lives upon the earth: “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee” (Prov. 3:1-2). Wisdom promises, “For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*” (Prov. 9:11-12).

This is not intended to be a 100% guarantee that the righteous will never die young. However, the general rule is that righteousness and wisdom preserve life; foolishness and wickedness hasten our death. How many times have you seen someone die young because of hard and foolish living? How many have died young because they contracted AIDS through the foolishness of following the Foolish Woman to her house of destruction? How many have died prematurely because they ignored God’s Wisdom concerning the avoidance of alcohol, drugs and excessive living?

2. It offers us quality of life. Consider the blessings offered to “the man that findeth wisdom” (Prov. 3:13):

Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in

her left hand riches and honour. **Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.** She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and **happy is every one that retaineth her** (Prov. 3:13-18).

Finding wisdom not only leads to length of days, it leads also to “pleasantness” and “peace.” The one who finds wisdom finds something that is likened to a tree of life. Note also that it is not just the man that finds wisdom who is described as happy; it is the man “that retaineth her” (Prov. 3:18). The sweet peace and happiness that wisdom brings is so wonderfully described in Proverbs 3:21-26:

My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be **life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.** Then shalt thou walk in thy way **safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.** When thou liest down, **thou shalt not be afraid:** yea, thou shalt lie down, and **thy sleep shall be sweet.** Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For **the LORD shall be thy confidence,** and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

If we never forsake wisdom, she will never forsake us; she will preserve us and keep us. Exalt wisdom and she will “promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee” (Prov. 4:6-9; cf. Prov. 3:35). Indeed, Wisdom offers the best treasures of all:

I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour *are* with me; *yea*, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit *is* better than gold, *yea*, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths

of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures (Prov. 8:17-21).

The treasures offered by Wisdom can never be corrupted by moth or rust, and thieves cannot break through and steal these treasures from us; they are “durable riches” (Prov. 8:18; cf. Matt. 6:19-21; John 6:27).

Wisdom will bring quality of life to our homes. This is not surprising since it is through wisdom that a house is built and by understanding it is established (Prov. 24:3). Marriages founded upon the wisdom of God’s Word are destined to succeed; marriages that are otherwise are destined for failure. When children in the home live by God’s wisdom the quality of life in that home is enhanced immeasurably: “Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance” (Prov. 29:3).

3. It will bring eternal life. The ultimate vantage of following God’s wisdom is that it will lead us to the joys of eternal life. Wisdom has always been near to God, and if we follow Wisdom then we shall someday be near to Him as well. If we live after the flesh we will die, but if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live (Rom. 8:13). In order to accomplish this goal we must live by the wisdom of God’s Word. I can think of no more compelling conclusion to this chapter than the words of Wisdom as recorded in Proverbs 8:32-36:

Now therefore **hearken unto me**, O ye children: for **blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me**, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For **whoso findeth me findeth life**, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: **all they that hate me love death** (Prov. 8:32-36).

Endnotes

1 From the software program **Biblical Illustrator**, distributed by Parsons Technology.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, **Believer's Bible Commentary: Old And New Testaments** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995), Pr. 2:2.



About The Author

Native of Illinois. Married to Tish (Hall), 3 children. Graduate: Freed Hardeman College (B.S., M. A. New Testament Text). Local preaching: TN, MS. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Author: *A Closer Look at Promise Keepers*. Debate: conducted in 1987 on Baptism and Apostasy. Director and Editor: *The Power Lectures*. Local Preacher: Southaven church of Christ, Southaven, MS, since 1991.

CHAPTER 3

The Fear Of The Lord

Curtis Cates

Introduction

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS is a book of wisdom—*hokmah*, which means skill, ability to achieve in a certain area(s), especially as related to morality, spiritual duty, and ethics. True wisdom comes only from God. Job asked the profound question, “But where shall wisdom be found?” He recognized fully that it does not come from man’s ingenuity (Job 28:1-12), it cannot be purchased (Job 28:13-19), it cannot be seen among men, nor can death reveal it to the living (Job 28:20-22). However, God understands and is characterized by infinite wisdom, and He used it in creation (Job 28:23-27).

The revealed answer to Job was, “Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). God says, “I will give it to you, if you will have the proper attitude toward me and my Revelation.”

Of course, contrary to the modernistic averment that the book of Proverbs is but a human compilation of folklore, it is the revelation of God’s wisdom concerning man’s relationship with God, with oneself, with his family, with his neighbor, with his government, in his work, with his co-workers, in his finances, et al.

The greatest questions of the ages involve what life is all about—where did I originate? What is my purpose here? Where am I going? Genuine wisdom is supremely, vitally important; it is crucial. Wisdom is revealed in the plenary, inerrant, verbally inspired Old Testament and New Testament.

The very epitome of wisdom was Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, as He came to reveal God to mankind and to “seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). He changed history; until He came, history was unsure of itself. It really is “His story.” The sacred message Christ gave the world is perfect, sublime wisdom, the highest ever, the only guide from earth to heaven, and the sole motivation and means of becoming like the Divine in morality, ethics, and love. And this wisdom meets man’s every legitimate aspiration and need.

Wisdom is keenly aware that God expects to rule in every aspect, in every one of the lives of His children. No part of life is out of God’s domain, whether thought, word, or deed; there is never an aspect of life in which Christians are not His children, whether “secular” or “religious.” How often have brethren preached on the topic “The Need for Seven-Day-a-Week Service”? Divine wisdom is to permeate it all; in that way, man is regulated by his Creator.

However, how does one acquire wisdom from above and by it allow God to regulate his life? This question brings the burden of this chapter before us, dear reader. We shall examine “the fear of the Lord” and see why “the fear of the Lord” is often called the motto or key statement, or concept, of Proverbs. What blessings will it bring? What tragedies will result if one does not have this vital attribute? These challenges will be examined in light of those passages in Proverbs which discuss the subject of “the fear of the Lord.”

“The Fear Of The Lord”

The phrase *yir'ath y'hovah*, the fear of Jehovah (ASV)/ the Lord (KJV), is defined by Gesenius as “reverence or holy fear.” This is to be understood in stark contrast to the type of “fear” that a child would have of an abusive parent, for example, afraid of being slapped down arbitrarily at any time. Some have pictured God as one who “toys” with and frustrates His creatures; and, when He is through “playing” with them, He snuffs them out. What a warped picture of our Heavenly Father, who is the very essence of love, mercy, and grace! Of course, there is the element of not wishing to hurt or offend the Father, but that grows out of the attitude of the righteous which is described in Proverbs 8:13, “The fear of Jehovah is to hate evil: Pride and arrogance, and the evil way, And the perverse mouth, do I hate.”

While a teenager, the writer had a nice 1930 Model A Ford Coupe with a rumble seat. However, my father's new 1958 Chevrolet was much nicer, and I asked Dad to let me borrow it on special occasions. As you can well imagine, I took much better care of his car than I did my own. Why? It was because of the love that I had for him and because of the trust he had in me. I tried never to disappoint him. Christ describes the infinite love of God for us in vivid terms:

Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who if his son shall ask for a loaf, will he give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. 7:7-11).

God loves us enough to chasten us; He wants no one to be lost:

My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reproved of him; For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:5-11).

The indescribable love of God for His offspring (Acts 17:28-29; Heb. 12:9) is seen in the gift of His only begotten Son on the cross, crucified for the salvation of each of us (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Heb 2:9; et al.). That love provokes reciprocal love in our hearts—and our reverence, awe, and fear of God are in direct proportion to the degree of that love for Him:

And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love, because he first loved us (1 John 4:16-19).

That type of unfeigned but deep love for the Father expresses itself in utmost Godly respect and reverential awe for Him. That reverence will then manifest itself in humble submission to God's will, growth in knowledge and in wisdom.

You as I, dear reader, loved our parents. That deep love cultivated great respect and admiration for their words of guidance, admonition, and warning. We grew in knowledge and in the right application of that knowledge (i.e., in wisdom). At times our parents would have to chasten us. The words of my father were different from the words of every other father because of my love and respect for him. The look of those eyes sometimes stopped me in my tracks, and the tone of that voice had its purposed effect, whether of affectionate praise or of loving rebuke. My father's voice was powerful, and his look was penetrating all the way to my soul. I loved him and wanted to please him so much. That helps me to gain insight into what constitutes "the fear of the Lord," though (as you well know) on a much lesser scale.

In the context of urging the Israelites to "fear Jehovah thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments," Moses commanded, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah; and thou shall love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:2-5). A deficit in love would cause diminished reverence and obedience. When Christ had made reference to this Scripture to the scribe, the scribe responded:

Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:28-34).

Christ commended him, for such love for God would likely lead to the proper reverence for Him and for His precious Gospel message of the kingdom, of the new birth into the kingdom, and of the Christian life. He might very well come to realize the urgent message of Christ to Satan, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). He might be like Cornelius, who “feared God with all his house” and had the attitude, “Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.” It is certainly the case that “in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:2; Acts 10:33-35).

But what about those who fail to succeed in their Christian walk and who remain in immaturity and carnality? Many fail to advance in wisdom and genuine spirituality because of a lack of putting the Word into practice in their lives—which, in fact, goes back to a lack of reverence for God. Note that to the Hebrews Paul wrote:

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:11-14).

Peter wrote that those who fail to add the “Christian graces” to their lives will lose that “abundant entrance” into heaven: “For he that lacketh these things is blind,

seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins” (2 Pet. 1:9).

With this foundation concerning “the fear of Jehovah,” we are prepared to examine some of the Proverbs of God as written by Solomon which impact our study.

The Blessings Of Fearing The Lord

Fearing the Heavenly Father brings great blessings and rewards in the everyday activities of common life, in living a life of service to God and others, in one’s worship of God, and in heavenly bliss at home with God after this life is over. The theme of fearing God permeates the whole book of Proverbs; it is a book on living, on doing for God. Never has a person been saved who did not fear God, trust His grace, and do His will. Thus, we “seek after Him” (Heb. 11:6).

The Blessing Of Wisdom

In the first place, fearing God brings knowledge and wisdom: “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10; cf. Prov. 1:7). Because, since the Garden of Eden and throughout the Bible, mankind has been commanded to obey God, it has been absolutely vital to seek to know God’s will for our lives (Gen. 2:16-17; Gen. 3:11-19; Gen. 6:5; Lev. 10:1-11; Deut. 11:1; 1 Sam. 15:3-26; Psm. 1:1-3; Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; Acts 13:46; Jas. 2:18-26; et al). One must know the truth, or he cannot be set free (John 8:32; John 17:17). The fear of Jehovah trusts God, not the will of man: “Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding; In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:5-6). Without fear of the Lord, knowledge and wisdom of men may be gained; however, this is **not** the wisdom of Almighty God. The Bible warns against being deceived by worldly

wisdom (Rom. 1:18-32; Col. 2:8; Col. 2:20-23; Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; et al.).

A mere compilation of facts has no proper foundation, nor has man chart or compass without knowing the One Who is behind all facts [not fables, myths, or speculations] and whose purposes transcend the universe and the mundane, carnal purposes of man. The absolutes in morals, ethics, and religion are based upon the very nature of God, and mankind must turn to His sacred revelation, the Bible. Man cannot by searching discover and find God; God had to—and did—reveal Himself to His offspring. The Bible is the story of God seeking man, and therein is wisdom. Thus, only when one turns to the sacred page to find the Holy One is understanding available, the beginning of which is reverence for the Almighty Creator. If the way is blocked by prejudice, apathy, pride, and/or deception, that mental blockage must be cut away so that one can be objective in His searching. Stony hearts must be softened, the prejudging must be arrested, and the ear must be opened to Divine Truth (Matt. 5:3; Luke 8:8-18; 2 Thess. 2:8-12; Rev. 1:3; Rev. 2:7; Matt. 7:24-27; Acts 13:46). The knowledge of God's Word in a good and honest heart will soften that heart. That person will advance in love, reverence, wisdom, joy, peace, and hope. Without that, all teaching is folly. But all who earnestly seek wisdom shall find it (Matt. 7:7):

Let thy heart retain my words; Keep my commandments, and live; Get wisdom, get understanding; Forget not, neither decline from the words of my mouth; Forsake her not, and she will preserve thee; Love her, and she will keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; Yea, with all thy getting get understanding (Prov. 4:4-7).

(Incidentally, those who were commanded by God through Solomon in the Old Testament to acquire wisdom were able to achieve that very thing **without** a direct, personal,

supernatural, miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts.)

Solomon stated in Proverbs 15:33, “The fear of Jehovah is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor goeth humility.” In order to sit in God’s school of instruction, the Holy Word, one must be characterized by humility. Isaiah viewed the glory and magnificence of God upon His throne, and he exclaimed, “Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts” (Isa. 6:5). Thus, the Lord was able to clean him up and use him powerfully in warning His people. If the prideful Jews of Christ’s day were going to enter the kingdom of Christ, they would have to become “poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3), and they would have to mourn over their sinful and desperate condition and hunger and thirst after genuine righteousness (Matt. 5:4-6). They would have to repent and humble themselves as little children (Matt. 18:3). Otherwise, they would not reverence Christ as King and submit to His rule over them (Psm. 2:10-12; Rom. 9:30-33).

The Blessing Of Forgiveness

In the second place, fearing God brings forgiveness from past sin, for “by the fear of Jehovah men depart from evil,” and “By mercy and truth iniquity is atoned for” (Prov. 16:6). The mercy and grace of God are indescribable. God is the One Who was/is offended by the grievous and egregious nature of sin, the transgression of His very nature and His law (1 John 3:4). And yet God was willing, through the precious gift of His only begotten Son, to pay the price for human redemption—“what marvelous mercy, what infinite love”! Mercy and truth joined in making possible man’s rescue from the fires of hell; surely, as in

the book of Job, one sees therein “the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful [full of mercy—CAC]” (Jas. 5:11). God so pitied our predicament (that we sin and cannot “pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps”) that His Son paid the terrible price of human redemption, “God’s amazing grace”!

Man cannot please God and go to heaven after this life if he lives an habitual life of sin; he must “depart from evil.” One, in following the example that the Lord taught His disciples, prays, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:12-13). As James wrote:

Be subject therefore to God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded. Be afflicted [over your sins—CAC], and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you (Jas. 4:7-10).

The Bible also says:

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted (Matt. 5:4).

The fear of Jehovah is a fountain of life, that one may depart from the snares of death (Prov. 14:27).

Everyone who reverences God seeks always to please Him, which means escaping the pollutions of this world, its defilements of sin, and never reverting back and becoming again “entangled therein and overcome” (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

The Blessing Of Spiritual Life

In the third place, since “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), since “all have sinned, and fall short of the

glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), and since sin separates from God (Isa. 59:1-2) now and (if persisted in) through eternity (2 Thess. 1:6-9; Eccl. 11:9-10; Rev. 21:8; et al.), fearing God brings escape from the punishment of sin: “The fear of Jehovah is a fountain of life, that one may depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 14:27). Only in the Lord is spiritual life (free from the bondage and guilt of sin) available: “The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visiteth with evil” (Prov. 19:23). Like a fountain that nourishes, produces, and brings forth many flowers and much fruit from those plants and trees on its banks, just so do the words, the commandments of the law of Christ produce the beautiful fruit of a life of purity and righteousness (cf. Psm. 1:1-3). Whereas those who practice the works of the flesh “shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” those who produce the fruit of the Spirit shall inherit eternal life:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof (Gal. 5:22-24).

Christ is the water of life: “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life” (John 4:14).

The person who fears God will “abide satisfied.” Fear brings satisfaction, fulfillment, and contentment. He shall never want for nourishment; his every spiritual need will be abundantly fulfilled: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). And Christ further promised, “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Though the Lord never

promises His children that they will never again experience cares, disappointments, sickness, and even death, He does assure us that His love, care, protection, and concern will get us through the trials and problems and that these things will enable us to grow and mature as Christians. Sometimes we may not know how we can go on and face the future, but Paul stated that the Lord told him:

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me....for when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

Another Proverb closely related is Proverbs 22:4: “The reward of humility and the fear of Jehovah is riches, and honor, and life.” Note first that humility is an absolute necessity in fearing the Lord; no one is going to submit to the Lord and revere Him in his life, if the person is haughty, prideful in heart and thinks that his own wisdom is equal to or superior to that of Jehovah. Eve failed to listen to God because she became prideful and independent. She knew more about how she should respond to God’s prohibition of the forbidden fruit and to subtle Satan’s lie than God knew; therefore, she partook of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3). Can you imagine that, dear reader? Eve thought she knew more than the infinite Creator of the universe! And sometimes, so do we! So how will such an one ever submit to God’s infinite wisdom and will? Every saved person has humbled and submitted his or her will to God’s will; only then has that person been forgiven of past sins!

Yet another Proverb closely related is Proverbs 28:14: “Happy is the man that feareth alway.” Of course, to reverence the Lord is to fear sin and its consequences. It

is ever to be on guard, spiritually watchful, and equipped like mature persons (1 Cor. 16:13). We work out our salvation with fear and trembling, as Paul commands in Philippians 2:12. We never underestimate our archenemy, Satan; we resist him, and he flees (Jas. 4:7). Only then can we be truly happy in the Lord.

The Blessing Of Walking Uprightly

In the fourth place, fearing God brings about doing what is right and pleasing to God: “He that walketh in his uprightness feareth Jehovah” (Prov. 14:2). Job was praised by God in these words: “Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil” (Job 1:8). The God-fearer’s outward words and actions are motivated and activated by a pure heart and righteous motives (Psm. 90:12; Luke 6:45). He or she is steadfast in service to God (1 Cor. 15:58) and in blessing others.

The Blessing Of Having Refuge In God

In the fifth place, fearing God furnishes us a place of security. Security is one of man’s basic, greatest drives and needs: “In the fear of Jehovah is strong confidence; And his children shall have a place of refuge” (Prov. 14:26). Job was certainly correct when he observed, “Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). God in His Word gives us great strength and courage to face the trials of this world, and there is perfect refuge in Christ (Eph. 1:3):

[W]e may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:18-19).

What shall we say then to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? (Rom. 8:31).

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Rom. 8:37).

God is ever a loving, steadfast supporter of His children; we simply need fully to place our trust in Him (John 3:16; 1 Pet. 5:7). Those who fear God do indeed trust in Christ and joyfully obey His will, the very meaning of “believeth” in John 3:16.

The Blessing Of Little Physical Wealth

In the sixth place, fearing God and at the same time having little of this world’s goods spare man of much heartache and pain: “Better is little, with the fear of Jehovah, than great treasure and trouble therewith” (Prov. 15:16). Compare also Proverbs 16:8, “Better is a little, with righteousness, than great revenues with injustice,” and Psalm 37:16, “Better is a little that the righteous hath than the abundance of many wicked.” Many people are destroyed because they have the idol of physical riches. The rich young ruler would not follow the Christ because he had many possessions, and he trusted in them:

Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Mark 10:24-25).

In other words, it is impossible for one who persists in **trusting** in his riches to go to heaven. The rich farmer, very regrettably, preached himself into hell, for he told himself essentially, “My riches are my most valuable possession.” He should have preached, “My soul is my most valuable possession, and my allegiance is to the Creator of my spirit.” He died lost! “Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

To him who feareth God, this world of “things” becomes tarnished; his treasures are laid up in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). He counts the spiritual riches in Christ as superior (Matt. 6:33), and he does not have to worry himself pursuing and preserving the riches of this world, which often take wings and fly away; this is trouble with which the God-fearer is not preoccupied and weighed down.

Connected to the desire for riches of this world is envy toward those who have worldly treasures: “Let not thy heart envy sinners; But be thou in the fear of Jehovah all the day long. For surely there is a reward; And thy hope shall not be cut off” (Prov. 23:17-18). From all appearances, the wealthy are among the happiest people in this world; therefore, they are envied. But, since riches do not bring genuine happiness (ask Solomon: Eccl. 2:11; Eccl. 2:18-19; Eccl. 5:10-11; et al.), the one who fears God is not controlled by them, but demonstrates his true devotion to God, righteousness, and doing good to his fellow man. The worldly possessions of persons are but temporary and are not the true riches which produce genuine happiness. The end of those who trust in riches and have the selfishness of the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 is the lifting up of one’s eyes in torments, but the reward of the righteous, however much the deprivation and suffering physically as Lazarus, is the bosom of Abraham. We have great and marvelous hope in Christ, and no one can deprive us of that desire and expectation of being cared for here and of eternal bliss in the other world. We shall have our reward.

The Blessing Of Having Stability In God

In the seventh place, fearing God brings stability and unchanging foundations for our lives in times of instability, rebellion, and change: “My son, fear thou Jehovah and the king; And company not with them that are given to change:

For their calamity shall rise suddenly; And the destruction from the both, who knoweth it?" (Prov. 24:21-22). Paul stated, "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). Except when the king or the higher powers violate the will and commands of God, we are responsible to obey them (Acts 5:29; Dan. 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:17). In earthly governments, leaders function by the authority of God the Father, and thus God's people are responsible to obey them. Governmental leaders are to honor God like the others of us and lead according to the principles of truth, morality, ethics, respect for human life, and protecting the welfare of their citizens. They cannot so lead if their citizens refuse to honor the king and obey his laws.

There are those who have little to no respect for any authority and/or rules. They would **change** in an unlawful way the rules of government; they would undermine the authority of both the powers that be and God. This would include the rebellious lawbreakers and dissidents as well as those innovators violating the authority of God. It would include those who disregard the complete authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18), His rule as King (Acts 2:36), His perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25; 1 Cor. 9:21; Isa. 2:2-3), and the fact that all must done in word or deed by His authority (Col. 3:17). "We need a new gospel for a new century," the liberals and rebels aver. Like the wicked angels and Sodom and Gomorrah, many today "set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities" (Jude 8), both in the government and toward God Himself, leading to destruction (Jude 10). Solomon commands, "Meddle [or company] not with them" (Prov. 24:21). Very clear are the warnings against "change" in the commandments of the Lord, the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42; e.g., Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:8; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:5-6; Rom. 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11). But

these prohibitions **mean nothing** to those who refuse to reverence God! Their loyalty is to themselves, not to God and to the king.

Because the Lord does not take vengeance immediately and/or because the king may not immediately learn about their rebellion, “the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11-13). However,

their calamity shall rise suddenly (Prov. 24:22).

it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God (Eccl. 8:13).

Whether against God, or against the king, or both, the “ruin,” the “destruction” of both shall come.

Conclusion

Very clear and motivational are those blessings promised to persons who fear the Lord. However, Solomon warns sternly those who would refuse to humble themselves, refuse to love God, and refuse to reverence God in their hearts and lives: “he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him” (Prov. 14:2). He neither loves nor reveres God, and he intends not to please Him. The ways of the rebellious are perverted, because, apart from revelation and inspiration, man is perverted. It always ends in perverted philosophy and perverted religion (Rom. 1:18-32). In fact, he ends up despising God and despising all that is true, good, and upright. All too often, such perversion leads one to hate those who stand for truth and to accuse falsely those who are “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17). See also Christ’s warnings in John 15:18-21.

Those who fail to fear the Lord harden their hearts against Him: “Happy is the man that feareth alway [as noted earlier]; But he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief” (Prov. 28:14). When a person fails properly to

educate his conscience in the truth and to reverence the Father, when a person refuses to give heed to the warnings of the Word of God and, often, of his God-fearing friends, he reaches the point where he cannot be touched with the Gospel of Christ's having been lifted up upon the cross for the salvation of man (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Heb. 2:9; Luke 19:10; John 1:29; Matt. 11:28-30). This innate protection of conscience which God gave every person is seared as with a hot iron, and he sins away the day of grace.

Dear reader, it is serious beyond human description to fail to cultivate in your heart and mine the reverential awe and Godly fear which our Lord pleads with us to have. May God bless us all to give heed while there yet remains time and opportunity!



About The Author

Native of Alabama. Married to Annette (Bingham), 2 children, 2 grandchildren. Holder of several academic degrees, including Ed. D. from the University of Alabama, and post-doctoral study at ACU. Local Preaching: AL, FL, GA, TN. Taught at several schools and colleges, author of several books, staff writer for periodicals. Gospel meetings and lectureships in many states, Klang, Malaysia, and Murmansk, Russia, Annual Asian Lectureship, Singapore. Director of Memphis School of Preaching.

CHAPTER 4

Receiving Instruction vs. Refusing Reproof

Billy Bland

Introduction

THE ABILITY TO LEARN and grow is a wonderful blessing. God has created mankind with a powerful intellect and volition. He can learn things that benefit mankind greatly, both physically and spiritually. Down through the ages, great strides have been made in medicine, communication, and travel. Each generation has the ability and opportunity to learn from the preceding generations. Man also can use his intellect and volition in a destructive way. “9/11” is a sad and tragic example of man’s mastermind of destruction. Unfortunately, some use their God-given ability to hurt and destroy the lives of men, women, and children.

The book of Proverbs has much to say relative to receiving instruction and rejecting reproof. Someone has observed, “we all know that we make mistakes, but we just do not want to be told such!” Why is that? Why do we not want to accept reproof? No doubt, there are many reasons, but perhaps one of the many reasons is that man’s pride gets in the way. Reproof, correctly given and received, can be one of the greatest blessings in our lives. To the lukewarm Laodiceans, Jesus said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19). They said they were rich and increased with goods

and had need of nothing and yet did not know that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17). Jesus gave them counsel in the form of rebuke and chastisement and admonished them to repent. Just as an individual can go astray and stand in need of rebuke, so can a congregation. How many congregations of God's people today have gone astray and are following the path of destruction! Such congregations stand in dire need of rebuke and repentance. Will they receive such? Presently, it looks doubtful.

Can rebuke be given in a right spirit or attitude? Obviously, it can, as Jesus is the One Who administered such to the Laodiceans. Someone observes, however, "that is Jesus and we do not have the right to rebuke any, since we ourselves are not perfect." While we are not perfect (sinless), we can be faithful. We are to repent of any sin in our lives and help others to get out of the sinning business as well.

We are commanded to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). Preaching the word involves reproof, rebuking, and exhorting. The word "rebuke" (Greek, *elengchoo*) means:

1. to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted 1 Cor. 14:24, 2. to find fault with, correct. a. by word; to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove: Jude 22, b. by deed; to chasten, punish Heb. 12:5.¹

While none of us like our faults to be exposed unto us, let us remember that, when such is from God's Word and motivated by love for our souls and for our betterment, we should view such objectively and respond appropriately. Perhaps all of us at one time or another have had the sad experience of suffering from some self-willed tyrant who

takes delight in exposing others just so he can have his own way. When this happens, we need to consider the source, pray for him, and again respond appropriately. John, the apostle of love, did not give in to the self-appointed dictator Diotrephes, and neither should we (3 John 9-10). However, rebuke at times is justifiable and is needful.

All of us, from the time that we are born to the day of our death, need instruction and reproof. Let us never accept the mindset that says, “That is just the way I am.” If “that is just the way I am,” and such is not correct—**CHANGE!**

The Wisdom Of Receiving Instruction

God’s Word encourages us to buy instruction: “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov. 23:23). When one sees the benefits of receiving instruction, he will see that buying such is a great investment which pays rich dividends. What right-thinking person doesn’t want to become more wise? God says, “Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning” (Prov. 9:9; cf. Prov. 19:25). Receiving instruction will also make one wise in the latter end: “Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end” (Prov. 19:20). If one wants to be known as a wise and knowledgeable person, he must be willing to receive instruction (Prov. 12:1; Prov. 23:12; Prov. 21:11).

Another benefit of receiving and keeping instruction is the ability to walk in the way of life: “He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth” (Prov. 10:17). Walking in God’s instructions keeps us in the strait and narrow way that leads to life (Matt. 7:13-14). The broad way is filled with those that refuse reproof! Young people must realize that they should receive their father’s instruction: “A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke” (Prov. 13:1).

In fact, God states that one is a fool who despises his father's instruction: "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent" (Prov. 15:5).

What attitude or disposition must one possess to obtain wisdom? Solomon wrote, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility" (Prov. 15:33). One's attitude toward God will determine whether he is a man of wisdom. The world in its wisdom has rejected God and would have us do the same. The world looks upon God's wisdom as "foolish." But what man has termed as "foolish," God has made "wise":

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ

Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:18-31).

The Syrian captain Naaman is a good illustration of the “foolishness of God.” Naaman, although a great man of valor, was a man who had the dreadful disease of leprosy. God, through Elisha, instructed Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman at first did not want to do as God commanded, refused the instruction of God, and went away in a rage! Went away he did, but he was still a leper! Fortunately for Naaman, he had a servant who pleaded with him to do as the prophet of God stated. When Naaman humbled himself and did as God directed and dipped in the river seven times, he was healed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5). Was it a wise thing to submit to the will of God? Indeed, it was! However, Naaman almost allowed his stubbornness to cause him untold suffering and death. Likewise, in order to be forgiven of our sins (spiritual leprosy), we are commanded to “repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Like Naaman, we can go away in a rage, but, when we do, we will go away still in our sins! However, like Naaman, we also can change our stubborn attitude and submit to the will of God and be baptized, as directed by God for our spiritual healing (salvation). The blessing of receiving and obeying Divine instruction includes a better life here and heaven after awhile (John 10:10).

The Folly Of Rejecting Reproof

Again the basic thought of “reproof” is “finding fault.” If there is a fault in our lives, we need to know such in order to make correction. Scriptural reproof is not given for the purpose of wanting to “get someone told,” but is given from a desire to see one become a faithful child of

God. A loving parent is one who will reprove his children in order that they might learn to correct their lives for the better. All of us need to examine ourselves, and even reprove ourselves, that we might do better. Paul wrote, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates” (2 Cor. 13:5). An honest self-examination will include “finding fault” with ourselves in order to make appropriate corrections. Sometimes the hardest mistakes to see are **our own!** It is easy to see the faults of others, but be blind to our own. Jesus warns against hypocritical judging:

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye (Matt. 7:1-5).

The above passage condemns hypocritical judging. It does not condemn faithful judging. In fact, the Bible commands us to conduct faithful judging. Regarding the matter of the man in the church in Corinth who had taken his father's wife, the church was “puffed up” and had done nothing relative to this sinful situation. Paul asked, “do not ye judge them that are within?” (1 Cor. 5:12). In the same chapter that Jesus condemns hypocritical judging, He states, “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16). A person can see if a tree is producing apples and correctly judge that such a tree is an apple tree. If it is producing bad apples that are underdeveloped and contain worms,

he “finds fault” with the tree and sprays the tree to aide it in its production, so that it may become a useful and productive tree. When a person is not living as directed by God, then someone should “find fault” with this person’s lifestyle and lovingly reprove such an one and help him become a fruitful and productive Christian.

Unfortunately, some will not receive reproof, though it is given from the Word of God and from a heart full of love. It is folly not to receive reproof that is just and right. A wise scribe will have someone other than himself to “proof” his writings to point out the mistakes before they go into publication. However, one preacher related how that another preacher asked him to “proof” his writings and then got angry at him because he found mistakes! Some perhaps get angry at the preaching of God’s Word when it exposes their faults, even though their names are not specifically called. One who partakes of alcoholic beverages may get angry at the preaching against such! A worldly person doesn’t want preaching that correctly exposes the sin of dancing, immodest apparel, unscriptural divorce and remarriage, etc. Yet someone observed that the work of a preacher is to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” If we are comfortable in our sins, we need to be afflicted! The prophets of the Old Testament afflicted (rebuked) unfaithful Israel and Judah when they turned away from God. Faithful evangelists in the first century did so to the churches that had departed from God’s paths. Such also is needed today.

Proverbs warns of those who will not be reprovved! “He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot” (Prov. 9:7). A scorner hates those who reprove him, but a wise man loves such an one: “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee” (Prov. 9:8; cf. Prov. 13:1; Prov. 15:12). A brutish person hates

reproof: “Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish” (Prov. 12:1). The consequences of rejecting reproof are described in the Proverbs. The writer states, “He, that being often reprovèd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov. 29:1). One who rejects reproof errs: “He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth” (Prov. 10:17). The folly of rejecting reproof is seen also in the following Scriptures. Solomon wrote:

The wise in heart will receive commandments:
but a prating fool shall fall (Prov. 10:8).

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he
that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise (Prov.
12:15).

Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed:
but he that feareth the commandment shall be
rewarded (Prov. 13:13).

Turning away from God’s Law (including His rebukes) causes God to turn away from one’s prayer: “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov. 28:9). Ultimately, rejecting reproof will cause one to die: “Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die” (Prov. 15:10; cf. Prov. 19:16).

There are great benefits in receiving reproof. A person who has done wrong and yet accepts reproof is honored. Solomon wrote, “Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured” (Prov. 13:18). It is a prudent thing to accept reproof: “A fool despiseth his father’s instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent” (Prov. 15:5; cf. Prov. 15:31-32). A fool may be beaten with stripes and yet never learn, whereas the wise man profits from mere reproof: “A

reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool” (Prov. 17:10). With the above in mind, we should highly value one who gives us proper reproof. Solomon stated, “As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear” (Prov. 25:12).

Take Heed *How* Ye Hear

Our Lord admonishes, “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have” (Luke 8:18). We are not only to take heed **what** we hear (Mark 4:24), but also **how** we hear (Luke 8:18). While the Bible emphasizes the responsibility of the teacher of the Word (Jas. 3:1), it also stresses the responsibility of the hearer of God’s Word. One’s attitude toward God and His Word is of utmost importance and should be one of great reverence: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). If one’s attitude toward God is fear (or reverence), he will take God’s counsel and become knowledgeable. The purpose of knowing God’s will, of course, is to become a doer of the Word. Jesus gave a parable of a wise man and foolish man illustrating this very point:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain

descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it (Matt. 7:21-27).

What kind of hearer am I? Do I listen with the intent of obeying? Do I accept only the “positive” things from God’s Word? Or am I also willing to accept His reproofs and rebukes? The following Scriptures from Proverbs show the importance of God’s Word in our lives, especially as it relates to instruction and reproof:

A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth (Prov. 14:6).

The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning. Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. (Prov. 16:21-23).

The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge (Prov. 18:15).

Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee (Prov. 22:17-21).

Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words (Prov. 23:9).

A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength (Prov. 24:5).

They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them. Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things (Prov. 28:4-5).

Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief (Prov. 28:14).

He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue (Prov. 28:23).

Seeking Wise Counsel

There have been many occasions when this writer has sought counsel from those who have given their lives to a faithful study and proclamation of God's Word. These men, whom I have trusted, have been men who have experience and wisdom. This doesn't imply that any man's word (or counsel) should be accepted over the Word of God, but, in situations, especially those dealing with people's lives and souls, wisdom is sought on **how** to apply the Word of God in a particular situation. We must remember that Rehoboam did not follow the counsel of the older, wiser men of his day, but foolishly followed the counsel of the young men, which counsel helped divide the kingdom! The Word of God encourages us to seek counsel from wise men. Solomon wrote, "Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war" (Prov. 20:18). Before one goes into war, which has the potential of costing many lives, one should seek "good advice." A person seeking to accomplish a great goal should seek the counsel of many: "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the

multitude of counsellors they are established” (Prov. 15:22; cf. Prov. 11:14; Prov. 13:10).

Where There Is No Vision, The People Perish

The Proverbs writer states, “Where there is no vision the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Prov. 29:18). The “no vision” here has reference to the setting forth of the Word of God. It emphasizes the essentiality of God’s Word in our lives. The American Standard Version translates the verse as follows: “Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; But he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” Commenting on this verse, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown wrote:

Where (there is) no vision, the people perish. Where there is no setting forth of the will of God, whether by special revelation, as in old times (Psm. 74:9; Lam. 2:9; Ezek. 7:26), or by the ordinary ministrations of God’s ministers and God’s Word, as now, “the people perish.” The Hebrew verb [*yipaara`* (OT:6544)] means “are dissipated;” also “revolt,” “become unbridled,” and so perish. To this unbridled, and consequently ruinous state, is opposed in the parallel clause, “happy;” as “the law” stands in contrast to “no vision.” Such did the Jews become, instead of their former happy state, when they rejected the Word of the Lord; and consequently lost their kingdom and place.²

This passage, along with a host of others, shows the need of the Divine revelation being faithfully proclaimed and heeded. If there is no vision, no setting forth of the Word of God, the people perish (or, as the ASV states, “cast off restraint”). Again, this verse stresses the need of instruction and reproof in our lives.

Conclusion

Solomon said, “Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease” (Prov. 22:10).

The word “scorn” (from the Hebrew *luwts*) means “to scorn, to make mouths at, to talk arrogantly.”³ The scorner is not one who will receive rebuke. As noted earlier, God says:

He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee (Prov. 7:7-8).

Which shall we be? A scorner or a wise man? A scorner rejects instruction and reproof, while the wise man accepts it and is greatly profited. May we remember, “Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish” (Prov. 12:1).

Endnotes

1 **Thayer’s Greek Lexicon**, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, 2000).

2 **Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary**, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, 1997).

3 **The Online Bible: Thayer’s Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon** (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1993). Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research.



About The Author

Native of Mississippi. Married to Terry (Collums), 1 daughter, 1 son deceased. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching; Southern Christian University (B. A.). Local preaching: TN, MS. Gospel meetings and lectureships in 7 states, Canada, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia. Editor, *Far East/World Evangelism Newsletter*. Instructor and Dean of Students at Memphis School of Preaching.

this page left intentionally blank

Part One

**Man's
Relationship
To His
Fellow Man**

CHAPTER 5

How To Treat Our Fellow Man

Sam Willcut

Introduction

THE BOOK OF *PROVERBS* is one of the best books of the Bible that handle human relations. The practical nature of its material gives a great deal of information and principles that are necessary for proper relationships. If one desires to learn how to treat his fellow man, he is to look no further than the priceless book of Proverbs. If one will simply intake the principles found therein, they will have a tremendous effect upon his life in treating his fellow man and relating with others.

Provocative in stimulating thought, a proverb points up a simple, self-evident truth...In the course of time a proverb—*mashal* in the Hebrew—not only became an effective tool of instruction but gained extensive use as a type of didactic discourse.¹

In other words, a proverb is something that gives a principle of truth without any details:

The book of Proverbs is rich in aphorisms, that is, practical advice on a host of subjects, from anger and envy to such topics as training children, caring for property, and avoiding the pitfalls of idleness and adultery.²

Thus, most of the proverbs contained in the Bible express attitudes. Proper attitudes toward our fellow man will result positively; improper attitudes toward our fellow man will result negatively by always making things difficult for the individual as well as others.

Proverbs emphasizes the importance of wisdom: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). Solomon mentions three crucial things in the book that are necessary for wisdom:

1. **Proper knowledge of God:** “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:6).

2. **Proper recognition and respect of parents:** “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Prov. 1:8).

3. **Proper outlook toward evil, the world, and the things contained therein:** “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Prov. 1:10).

Therefore, as these three things accentuate one’s relationship with God, his family, and the world, one must have a proper understanding of these three things before he can know how to treat his fellow man properly. Should one lack in any of these things, he will not treat his fellow man in the proper fashion.

This lesson will deal with human relations from three vantages: how we should treat our neighbors, how we should treat the poor, and how we should do that which is good unto others. Solomon began this book:

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, **justice, and judgment, and equity**” (Prov. 1:1-3, emp. mine throughout, SW).

He later wrote, “Then shalt thou understand **righteousness, and judgment, and equity**; yea, every good path” (Prov. 2:9). These three words summarize this particular lesson.

“Justice” or “righteousness” refers to “what is right, just, normal; rightness, justness...righteousness, as ethically right.”³ For example, many of the Proverbs deal with the improper use of the tongue in our relationships. God teaches that the tongue is simply a revelation of what is inside us (cf. Matt. 12:34-37). Thus, we are to treat our neighbor justly and righteously by utilizing proper uses of the tongue. In addition, Solomon points out the need for justice and righteousness in our relations by proper weights and measures. One would not take a bribe if he allowed the Divine principles of truth, justice, and righteousness to influence him. How we desperately need such in our government today!

“Judgment” originates with the “attribute of the justice, right, rectitude of God” and “of man.”⁴ As this lesson will cover soon, one must distinguish, especially in our day, between one in need and one wanting a handout.

“Equity” refers to “evenness, uprightness, equity ...in ethical sense, uprightness, equity, as taught in the school of wisdom.”⁵ The Bible emphasizes this repeatedly.

The love of God originated the scheme of redemption. God created Adam and Eve and provided everything for their satisfaction and ideal contentment. However, through the deception and temptation of Satan, Adam and Eve gave their allegiance to him, turning their back on God. In spite of the fact that God was under no obligation to them, His great love for them created the scheme of redemption. Thus, His love for humanity should create within us our love for God (cf. 1 John 4:19). When we love and worship God correctly, this will influence our daily lifestyle and relationships with others. He expects a

separation of heart, attitude, and conduct, as discussed in the book of Proverbs. Therefore, the book of Proverbs teaches the importance of attitude. The scheme of redemption begins in correcting wrong attitudes developed by temptation and sin.

How We Should Treat Our Neighbors

Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee (Prov. 3:29).

A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass (Prov. 16:29-30).

The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes (Prov. 21:10).

A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow (Prov. 25:18).

A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet (Prov. 29:5).

In learning how to treat our fellow man, Divine wisdom through Solomon teaches many things about human relations, including injustice, the power of our influence to bring harm, lying, and even flattery. Justice towards our neighbors is to be fair, honest, and right. Concerning our dealings with others, we are not to justify the wicked or condemn the righteous. We need to base the manner that we treat our neighbors, especially in controversial situations, upon just principles. However, through the temptation of Satan, humanity has chosen other means to deal with neighbors, resulting in condemning the righteous and upholding the wicked.

“He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace” (Prov. 11:12). Here is great advice that Solomon contrasts. Proper human relationships towards our neighbors dictate that we will not despise others, but will hold our peace when necessary. We should not ever show contempt or despise those around us, but know the precious value of silence—something difficult for many of us (cf. Jas. 1:19).

“Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips. Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work” (Prov. 24:28-29). As we will address later in the lesson, we should not possess the evil attitude of revenge. The number of children and teenagers who quickly develop this disposition is disturbing. Jesus shows the true heart of His disciples when He said, “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt. 5:39).

“Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away” (Prov. 25:9-10). The great wisdom contained in this book in how to treat our neighbors is tremendous—how sad that many do not practice such! Even many Christians have a hard time understanding this principle—we are to not talk with others about problems concerning someone else. The result will be shame. This principle finds its application in Matthew 18:15ff. Jesus said that we are to first “tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” Only after such action fails do we mention it further to others for reconciliatory purposes, and not for slanderous, gossiping purposes.

“Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour’s house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee” (Prov. 25:17). In

other words, do not overstay yourself. Do not wear out your welcome or become a pest. Amazingly enough, trying to do too much good would not produce the desired results.

“As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?” (Prov. 26:18-19). Joking can certainly be something pleasant and humorous. This trait can help develop good relationships with others, but only if we do it in the proper way. Funny people may be the center of attention and may draw a crowd, but we need to be very careful about pulling jokes on somebody else and hurting their feelings, even if the intentions were well-meaning and accidental. People do not like to be the brunt of jokes. Even husbands and wives need to learn this principle, since some husbands and wives try humorously to say things denigrating the other in jest. While certainly other factors play a part, couples have divorced because one could not endure the humiliation of always being the brunt of the spouse’s jokes. Paul said that “jesting” should not be among the saints (Eph. 5:4). We need to be careful about what we say, even in a joking manner.

God has not made any creature with which He is not concerned (Matt. 6:26; 1 Cor. 9:9-10; Deut. 25:4). Therefore, we are to use this principle in supporting others and caring for our neighbors. Since God created the world, He is interested in everything He created—we are to respond in the same manner toward our neighbors. Jesus emphasized this when He gave the second greatest commandment: “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:39). James commented, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (Jas. 2:8).

How We Should Treat The Poor

Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment (Prov. 13:23).

The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly (Prov. 18:23).

All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him... He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (Prov. 19:7; Prov. 19:17).

He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not (Prov. 21:26).

The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all (Prov. 22:2).

He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want (Prov. 22:16).

Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them (Prov. 22:22-23).

A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food (Prov. 28:3).

He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse (Prov. 28:27).

The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it (Prov. 29:7).

The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the Lord lighteneth both their eyes (Prov. 29:13).

God taught the proper value of work. He illustrates such even in the book of Proverbs:

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer,

or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest (Prov. 6:6-8).

Those who work closely with benevolence ministries understand the judgment that must occur by distinguishing between those who are truly in need and those who do not understand this necessary value. Even Paul addressed those who chose not to work: “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). Our approach to work is, in fact, our philosophy of life.

However, Jesus said, “For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good” (Mark 14:7). Solomon said in Proverbs 15:17, “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.” In other words, dinner is much better with bologna sandwiches in love than to eat steak and potatoes with hatred. One is to understand that we can develop great relationships with the poor. The attitude of life and principles by which they live give them enjoyment and gratitude that many who are rich may never know. We are to work on our character by not placing material things first. Whenever we place them first in our lives, we will find covetousness, greed, and selfishness, which can distinguish all attitudes that really make life worth living. It is sad the numbers of families that have made worldliness so dominant in their lives—no wonder we are battling selfishness, lack of peace, and dissatisfaction in our homes today! When we place proper attitudes first, even if we have lesser material possessions than others do, we will still have one another.

“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee” (Prov. 3:27-28). Solomon

emphasizes the importance of benevolence in order to establish and maintain good relationships with our neighbors. This is one of the best things we can do in learning how to treat others. Yet, in doing so, we are not to procrastinate in our goodwill. It is dangerous for us to see the opportunity of doing something good, and then delaying such so that we might not even get around to performing what we planned or thought. As a result, we will lose the benefits not only of what it would have done for the persons directed, but also of what it would have done for us. Therefore, we will rob others and ourselves of something that will contribute to treating our neighbors righteously.

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it...He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor (Prov. 11:24-26; Prov. 22:9).

Liberality is an essential attitude for developing good relationships with others, especially as it is demonstrated to the poor. God will bless those who are liberal to the poor as well as the benefactors. However, a failure to be liberal will conversely affect us negatively.

The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends. He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he...He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor (Prov. 14:20-21; Prov. 14:31).

Solomon again contrasts these attitudes of despising our neighbor and being merciful to the poor.

“Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished” (Prov. 17:5). Solomon takes this further to show the true indicator of character. The effect of our treatment to the poor will affect our relationship with God. In Acts 8:1-3, Luke records that Saul was persecuting the church. Yet when Jesus approached him on the road to Damascus in Acts 9, the first words from His mouth to Saul were, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). He immediately answered Saul’s inquiry, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:5). Saul learned the lesson very early that our treatment of others can directly affect our relationship with God.

“Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard” (Prov. 21:13). It is worthy of reflection to consider that a refusal to hear the plea of the poor would mean that God would close His ears unto our prayers. The practical New Testament book of James records the conditional aspect of mercy: “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (Jas. 2:13).

“Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy” (Prov. 31:9). The mother of King Lemuel taught him how to be the right kind of king. A godly ruler needs to have compassion on the poor of his people. This is repeatedly urged throughout Scripture (Psm. 82:3; Jer. 22:16). Oppression of the poor was a mark of an ungodly nation (Deut. 24:14; Eccl. 5:8).

God has always had a special concern for the poor and those who were needy. Anytime God’s people became inconsiderate, inattentive, and indifferent about these people, trouble would follow. A lack of compassion for the poor indicates that the impact of the truth of God’s Word has not affected our lives. The distinction between God and idolatry is that idolatry does not have any concern for

people who are poor and needy. Every time God's people left these principles, they always drifted away into apostasy. Our worship to God is to be an expression of gratitude in such worship for being able to enjoy His provisions when we do so properly. Thus, this gratitude should lead to our proper attitudes toward others, especially those who are poor. Our joy shared with others shows God's goodness and compassion in our own lives—this causes us to think about the needs of others.

Consider that we are in the church because of God's goodness and compassion. As a result, I bring him my firstfruits in service and worship and share that with others. It is a tragic mistake to think that God's goodness leads us to selfishness. Nevertheless, the goodness of God should lead us to unselfishness.

God has always used His people to provide for the poor and needy, whether it is through regulations of harvest (Lev. 23:22), tithing (Deut. 26:12), or such like. God intended His love for His people to create benevolence in their hearts. In fact, the system of Judaism was not just a system of law, but God intended it also to be a system of benevolence. One will misunderstand the religion of God if one has the idea that benevolence is not a part of religion. Whenever the nation of Israel failed to remember the poor and needy, they were traveling the road to ruin, indicating a selfish, worldly character, with the result of going farther away from God until they ended up in captivity. Even the Pharisees during the days of Jesus were so selfish and displayed such a total disregard for the poor that they thought nothing of robbing widows (cf. Matt. 23:14).

When one thinks about the scathing words of Jesus pictured at the judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 and fails to understand the significance and extreme importance of showing compassion for the poor, one is as far away from godliness as possible!

How We Should Do That Which Is Good Unto Others

He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour:
but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto
him (Prov. 11:27).

Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and
truth shall be to them that devise good (Prov.
14:22).

Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not
depart from his house (Prov. 17:13).

The New Testament gives this principle in application. Paul talked about the law of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7-10), and, in that very context, he urged Christians:

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:9-10).

Jesus said, “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36). We are to do that which is good unto others, showing them mercy and demonstrating for them forgiveness (Matt. 6:14-15).

Love recognizes responsibility to others. One must not look the other way and claim not to see someone in need (cf. Deut. 22:1-4). The Bible sets forth the principle all of us need to learn—that we are to do that which is good unto others. It is not satisfactory with God that we simply refrain from doing harm. Sometimes we may satisfy ourselves by knowing that we have not harmed others, but that is not the issue. Rather, as God’s people, we also have the responsibility of doing that which is good. Am I doing something to help somebody? Since we are the people of God, we are not to look at things from a selfish viewpoint. It is incorrect to say, “That is

none of my business,” when I have the opportunity to help.

Think about this principle in today’s society. People are committing crimes in broad daylight with people onlooking, and nobody seems to want to help others. Was that not the case with the priest and the Levite in Luke 10:25-37? Does not the example of the “Good Samaritan” apply to this principle in Proverbs? This is also the principle found in application in Galatians 6:1-2:

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Jesus gave what we commonly think of as the “Golden Rule” in Matthew 7:12: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” This would perfectly summarize our responsibility to do that which is good unto others.

Conclusion

One does not have to be a licensed counselor to help people with their problems, especially in dealing with other people, if he will simply use the Divine revelation God has provided, especially in the book of Proverbs: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (Jas. 3:17).

Allow me to close with a poem of which the author is unknown:

I knelt to pray, but not for long—
I had too much to do.
I had to hurry and get to work,
for bills would soon be due.

So, I knelt, said a hurried prayer
and jumped up off my knees.

My Christian duty was now done—
my soul could rest at ease.

All day long, I had no time to spread a word of cheer.
No time to speak of Christ to friends,
they would laugh at me, I fear.

“No time, no time, too much to do.”
That was my constant cry.
No time to give to souls in need,
but at last the time to die.

I went before the Lord;
I came and stood with downcast eyes.
For in His hands, God held a book;
it was the book of life.

God checked into His book and said,
“Your name I cannot find,
I once was going to write it down,
but never found the time.”

Endnotes

1 Samuel J. Schultz, **The Old Testament Speaks** (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 288.

2 Herman O. Wilson, **Studies in Proverbs** (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing, 1969), p. 8.

3 Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver & Charles A. Briggs, **The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon** (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), p. 841.

4 Ibid, p. 1048.

5 Ibid, p. 449.



About The Author

Graduate of Faulkner University in 1993, where he met his wife, Melissa, 2 children; Christopher (4 years old) and Courtney (2 years old). Local Preaching; in third year at Munford, TN. Formerly worked in Adamsville, AL. Preached for fifteen (15) years, the last ten (10) in full-time located work.

CHAPTER 6

How Not To Treat Our Fellow Man

Scott Lambert

Introduction

I *CONSIDER IT A GREAT* privilege and honor to be a part of such an endeavor as this. I have appreciated the lectureship books and all of the hard work that has gone into it. I want to commend the elders for making this one of our brotherhood's finest lectureships and B. J. Clarke for all of the work that he does in directing such an effort.

When we stand before the Lord on that great and final day, we will be judged predominately (although not exclusively) on how we have or have not treated our fellow man. Jesus, after speaking of the demise of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:1-35), began to speak regarding His second coming (Matt. 24:36). In the chapter immediately following, He spoke of the necessity of being prepared (Matt. 25:1-13), the responsibility of stewardship (Matt. 25:14-30), and then the way we have conducted ourselves in regard to our fellow man (Matt. 25:31-46).

When Jesus addressed the disciples with what they had and had not done, the question was asked, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?" (Matt. 25:37). Again, the question is asked, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" (Matt. 25:44). The response of Jesus is profound indeed:

“Assuredly, I say to you inasmuch as you **did** or **did not** do it to the least one of these, you **did** or **did not** do it to Me” (Matt. 25:40; Matt. 25:45, emp. mine, SL). The message is very clear; the way we treat or do not treat others is taken very personally by the Lord.

On another occasion, Jesus was asked by a lawyer, “Which is the greatest commandment in the law?” (Matt. 22:36). What a fascinating question! This lawyer had asked Jesus to take the entire corpus of the Old Testament, thirty-nine books, and sum them up in one command! Jesus, without blinking an eye, went straight to the Pentateuch and quoted from the book of Deuteronomy, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37). However, He did not stop there. He went on to quote a second passage, this time from the book of Leviticus. He said, “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matt. 22:39-40). Jesus, with two passages, sums up the entire Old Testament. In a parallel account we are told, “There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31).

If we were given the opportunity to ask the same question to Jesus today under the New Testament dispensation, the same answer would be given. The apostle Paul said:

For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” “and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom. 13:9).

Are you aware of the fact that nations and cities in the Old Testament stood or fell based on the way they treated their fellow man? The Old Testament is filled with

examples of this. Paul once said, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). Why did the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah fall? Perhaps the first thought that comes to mind is the sin of homosexuality. That is certainly true. However, that is not what God pinpointed as the ultimate reason for their demise:

Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness: neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy (Ezek. 16:49).

Consider the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar. He was “a king of kings” (Dan. 2:37). Daniel acknowledged his power when he spoke of the next kingdom that followed as being “inferior to his” (Dan. 2:39). Nevertheless, the Lord overthrew Nebuchadnezzar from his lofty position because of his inhumane treatment of others:

Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps their may be a lengthening of your prosperity (Dan. 4:27).

What about ancient Israel? Why were they taken away into captivity? The prophet Amos tells us why. Apart from their state of ease (Amos 6:1) and their lack of spirituality (Amos 5:12-13; Amos 8:11-12), they also treated their own brethren cruelly and harshly:

They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, And they abhor the one who speaks uprightly. Therefore, because you tread down the poor And take grain taxes from him, Though you have built houses of hewn stone, Yet you shall not dwell in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, But you shall not drink wine from them (Amos 5:10-11).

Amos would go on to say that they even traded dishonestly with their own brethren (Amos 8:5). It is little wonder the Lord would say, “Prepare to meet your God, oh Israel” (Amos 4:12)!

When you consider the story of the rich man and Lazarus, was the rich man that bad of a guy? After all, he didn’t kick Lazarus when he got out to get his mail every day, did he? No. The reason he will be lost for all eternity is because he did not have any consideration for his fellow man (Luke 16:21; Luke 16:25). This is a perfect, yet profound, illustration of what Jesus was addressing in the final judgment scene of Matthew 25.

Our attention turns now to the passages that have been assigned. Since it is the case that we will be judged on how we have or have not conducted ourselves in regard to our fellow man, let us notice some practical points from the most practical book of the Bible—the Proverbs. Let’s notice 4 points from the book on “How We Should Not Treat Our Fellow Man.”

We Should Not Envy Our Fellow Man

When you talk about envy, you are talking about something serious. As Jesus stood before Pilate while on trial for His innocent life, Pilate perceived that the Jews wanted to crucify Jesus because they were an envious people (Mark 15:10). Envy can cause us to stoop to levels we did not think were possible. As Solomon puts it, “A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rotteness to the bones” (Prov. 14:30). It is like a cancer that begins in a small spot but quickly spreads throughout the body, eating away the vitality of a person. It is important to note that the word “envy” as depicted here is interchangeable with jealousy, and is often translated such in Scripture. However, there is somewhat of a difference in the words. Jealousy has to do with wanting something that others have. Envy, on the other hand, goes deeper than that. It

takes jealousy to another level. It has to do with the anger and bitterness that can soon follow. It will cause us to rejoice when our brethren weep and to weep when they are rejoicing. No wonder Solomon said it is the rotteness of the bones.

David Jeremiah, in his book **Slaying The Giants In Your Life**, tells a story about the power of envy:

The ancient Greeks tell the story of a swift athlete who came in second. He stood at the finish line, huffing and puffing as the crowd cheered—not for him, but for the winner.

The second-place finisher had to stand there as they brought the victor's crown and the other prizes. He had to stand with the other also-rans as congratulatory speeches were made in the victor's honor. And he had to walk through town to reach home, hearing nothing but the name of the winner on the lips of everyone he saw.

The victor had a great statue erected in his honor, right in the center of town. The second-place finisher had to see it every day of his life, and he came to think of himself as a loser. The envy and jealousy began to take charge of his soul until he could accomplish almost nothing from day to day. Why hadn't he been the winner? Why hadn't he been able to find within himself those two or three strides that separated the champion from the chump? Every night, as sleep eluded him, he crept out into the darkness and made his way to the victor's statue. There he chiseled away a few more bits of stone from the foundation. Each night the great marble figure was weaker.

But one night he got more than he bargained for. He chiseled away one more bit of stone, and the massive athletic figure cracked loudly and slid forward. The great marble champion crashed down on the little man with the chisel, and death came instantly. The athlete had been crushed by the very image of the man he'd despised.¹

The poor man with the chisel allowed the sin of envy to literally rot him away. With each passing day, piece by piece, he allowed his envy to consume him.

This is exactly what happened to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They could not stand coming in second place to Him. Jesus had just brought Lazarus back from the dead and, as a result of the "sign" that Jesus had performed, many believed in Him (John 11:45). This was the way Jesus intended for people to respond. However, there were those who cared more about their allegiance to the leaders than to their God. Like a bunch of pot-bellied pigs, they went squealing to the Pharisees in hopes of stirring the pot. Upon hearing about the sign that was wrought at the hands of Jesus, the Pharisees tried from there on out to find some sort of way to kill Him. Why? They could not stand to have their thunder taken. Solomon said, "Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy?" (Prov. 27:4). The answer to the rhetorical question is simply "you cannot."

You mark it, any congregation where the members have a problem with envy, division will soon follow. Paul addressed this problem with the immature Christians at Corinth: "For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). There were various cliques in the church that thought a bit too highly of certain men. As a result the church was divided. How many times have you seen people jealous of the houses people have or the cars people drive? Many can become downright nasty. Remember Korah from the Old Testament? He had to learn this the hard way. He once approached Moses and said, "You take too much upon yourself" (Num. 16:3). On the surface that may sound okay. However, the Psalmist tells us they "envied Moses in the camp" (Psm. 106:16). Wanting what others have can come with a high price.

We Should Not Strive With Others

We are told, “Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm (Prov. 3:30). Perhaps the greatest reason we have so much strife among brethren today is because of a lack of information: “Do not go hastily to court; For what will you do in the end, when your neighbor has put you to shame” (Prov. 25:8). According to the passage, not knowing all the facts can really be an embarrassing situation (cf. Prov. 18:17). Jesus gave a similar admonition to the people of His day: “Judge not according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Jesus is telling us to get the facts straight before we make an assessment of a situation. As a matter of fact, it can cause a serious situation.

There was an interesting incident with the children of Israel when civil war almost broke out over what the children of Israel “heard someone say” (Josh. 22:11). Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh had erected this impressive altar by the Jordan that someone misconstrued to be an altar to another god. In their zeal for spiritual purity, they were about to go in and wipe them off of the map—too bad this zeal didn’t last. Thankfully, the rulers of the 10 tribes had enough sense to investigate the matter before they began to fight.

This incident could have driven a wedge between these tribes that could have caused permanent damage: “A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Prov. 18:19). Bars of a castle are difficult to break down. But, just as it is hard to break those bars, it is even harder to mend fights with brethren. I know family members who, due to the emotional trauma of fighting, haven’t spoken to each other for years. We have all lamented over those precious souls who have strayed from the faith never to return because of a fight they had with some of the members about things that are trivial and of no value. There is no excuse for this type of behavior; nevertheless, it is a sobering reality.

Again, “The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts” (Prov. 17:14). This proverb tells us not to bite off more than we can chew. So many people are enamored with fighting with others. Some like to fight more than they like to breathe. Whole congregations can be torn apart because two strong personalities are clashing with each other. Brethren then pick sides, and the whole thing divides the church: “He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears” (Prov. 26:17). I like this one because it teaches us all to mind our own business. Most dogs were not domestic pets back in those days. Therefore to grab one by the ears was a sure way to get bitten.²

In the same chapter we are told:

Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood is to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the innermost body (Prov. 26:20-22).

This individual takes things that would otherwise have ended and blows them out of proportion.³

The Bible speaks of the danger of a busybody. This same ungodly man is the same one that will “dig up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire” (Prov. 16:27). It is truly amazing how some will go so far as to dig up dirt on other people. I sometimes wonder if the phrase “we are brethren” means anything to this type of person (Gen. 13:8). Just imagine what a powerful force they could be if they channeled all the energy they put into digging up dirt on members into bringing people to the Lord! Such men should be avoided at all cost: “He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips” (Prov. 20:19).

Sometimes, it is better to walk away than to strive with others: “It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel” (Prov. 20:3). Solomon says, “Anyone can start a fight”; however, it takes a bigger man to walk away. Wisdom makes the choice. Jesus did not allow the insults and slaps in the face to interfere with being about the Father’s business (Luke 2:49), and neither should we. We have a major issue with pride these days that will not allow us to take the insults of life. But, “He who loves transgression loves strife, and he who exalts his gate seeks destruction” (Prov. 17:19).

We Should Not Protect The Guilty And Abandon The Innocent

If you want to see this principle in practice, then you need not look any further than our own judicial system. Some of the court debacles in the last decade show this to be the case. The legal system that was given to us by our founding fathers was taken from British law, which came straight from the Bible. Our legal system was designed to enforce justice and act out exactly what the Bible set up government to do (Rom. 13). Our original system was set up to give each individual a fair and reasonable trial, just like that of the Old Testament: “Then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you” (Deut. 13:14). All the facts were brought out, and then the proper verdict was given. There was no bargaining or last minute heroics taking place. Do you want to know what a fair trial is today? For the defense, it is to pull every possible shenanigan to get their client off, whether he is guilty or not—the majority of attorneys could care less. Some of the trials in recent years show that, if you have enough money, you can get yourself off the hook.

But then you have the prosecutor on the other side who could care less if you are guilty or not. He is going to

do everything in his power to hang the accused. I am fearful that we have completely lost sight of justice. The Bible is crystal-clear on this issue. If a person is guilty, he deserves his reward: "A man burdened with bloodshed will flee into a pit; Let no one help him" (Prov. 28:17). Why? Because he is reaping what he has sown (Gal. 6:7). This even includes the death penalty. As a matter of fact, through the eyes of God, the death penalty was an absolute necessity. Many are not aware of the fact that there were 16 capital offenses that, if you violated, demanded the death penalty. This included rape (Deut. 22:22-27), kidnapping (Exod. 21:16; Deut. 24:7), and homosexuality (Lev. 18:22). This would take care of some of the woes that plague our nation, wouldn't it?

Sometimes you hear people say, "The death penalty does not work. People are still going to commit these acts regardless of what you do." I liken this argument to those that argue that church discipline doesn't work. It does work when implemented properly! Men fear death (Heb. 2:15). Therefore, the government should use that as a deterrent: "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11). Justice must be served promptly. Today men and women who have been condemned to die sit in their air-conditioned jail cell with a nice bed and television for 30 years waiting on the appeal process to run its course, and then execution may or may not follow. Back when our founding fathers were alive, if you committed an act worthy of death on Thursday, you were hung on Friday. Justice was served promptly. When used correctly, it will deter men from committing evil acts.

We also have a responsibility to the innocent:

Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," Does not

He who weighs the heart consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds? (Prov. 24:11-12).

We are reminded of the words of James, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17).

We live in a time when we care about no one but ourselves. We have our jobs and our hobbies, and we have not a care in the world. I don’t want to be bothered by what others are doing or need. In the old classic “Twelve Angry Men,” there was a court case surrounding a young man who was guilty of killing his father. He was a poor, troubled young man who did not grow up in the best of environments. Eleven of the jurors wanted to hurry up and convict the young man and go on with their busy lives. One man was even more concerned with the baseball game he was about to miss than this young man’s life. I am afraid that is how we are today. We must be willing to go the extra mile for those who are in need of our assistance: “Open your mouth for the speechless, In the cause of all who are appointed to die” (Prov. 31:8). King Lemuel in this passage instructs us to go out on a limb if need be to help those who are in need. And do not grow weary doing it (Gal. 6:9). God knows our psyche, and He knows that we are prone to grow weary in rendering proper assistance to others. Those who would be God’s people must go above and beyond what those in the world might be willing to do.

We Are Not To Show Partiality

Contrary to the view of our Calvinist friends, our God is not a partial God: “In truth I perceive that God shows not partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34-35). Since it is the case that our God is not a partial God, we should not be either:

These things also belong to the wise: It is not good to show partiality in judgment (Prov. 24:23).

To show partiality is not good, Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress (Prov. 28:21).

These passages are easy to understand but more difficult to apply. I suppose it is human nature for us to be closer to some than others. We all have different personalities and different likes and dislikes, and we naturally choose a certain group of people to associate with. Jesus himself had his “inner circle” in Peter, James, and John, all of whom He would often take off by Himself. I have my favorite preachers I like to listen to, and you do as well. So there is nothing wrong with having your favorites.

However, what do we do when problems arise, and the people we love and are the closest to are involved? I believe Timothy may have faced that problem in Ephesus with the eldership with which he was working. Perhaps he, or members of the church were having some problems with the elders. This certainly could be a possibility since qualifications are brought up in 1 Timothy 3, and how to relate to elders is brought up in 1 Timothy 5. Be that as it may, Paul says, “Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). As a young preacher who can relate to Timothy in so many ways, I can only imagine how he must have felt with this daunting task placed upon his shoulders. But, as if that were not enough, He goes on in the very next verse to say, “I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality” (1 Tim. 5:21). Don’t draw conclusions without the facts, and don’t hold back just because it may be someone you are close to.

How difficult that is! “It is not good to show partiality to the wicked, or to overthrow the righteous in judgment” (Prov. 18:5). Some people will never open their mouths

and will always choose the side of a friend just because they are friends. A wise man will hear both sides of an issue and, if need be, take a stand against those to whom he is closest.

Conclusion

How can anyone say the Bible is an outdated book that is not relevant to us today? The Bible is a timeless masterpiece given by God Almighty to aid us in every situation in which we may find ourselves (2 Pet. 1:3). May we all strive to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Tit. 2:10), that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Endnotes

1 David Jeremiah, **Slaying The Giants In Your Life** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), pp. 189-190.

2 Denny Petrillo, **Course Notes on the Proverbs** (Maxwell, TX: World Video Bible School, 2001), p. 110.

3 Ibid, p. 111.



About The Author

Native of Louisiana. Married to Beth (Robert), 2 children. Graduate: Brown Trail School of Preaching; Southern Christian University (B. A., M. A.). Local Preaching: OK, LA, UT. Campaign work: TX, UT, Jamaica. Gospel meetings and Lectureships in various states. Local preaching, Sandy, Utah.

CHAPTER 7

How To Treat Our Friends And Enemies

Paul Sain

Introduction

GODLY LOVE AND RESPECT are expressed to the faithful Christians at Southaven. The elders of this great church are highly esteemed and appreciated, along with its preacher, B. J. Clarke. You are a beacon of faithfulness in a brotherhood often suffering tragic spiritual shipwreck.

The study of Proverbs is indeed a most unique and valuable study. It is a book that deals with all aspects of our lives; it is a volume of valuable and practical sentence sermons. May we carefully and reverently approach each precious word and phrase.

The direction of our study is regarding friends and enemies and how we should regard and treat them. It has been said that one may have many enemies in their life and will have only a few “true” friends. There is such a vast difference between an acquaintance and a true friend.

Leroy Brownlow has offered this excellent assessment:

A friend is like a break for a hungry appetite; like a balancing pole for walking the tightrope of life; like a soothing ointment for the cuts and bruises of life; like a golden link in the chain of life; and like a vine that clings to us despite our weaknesses.¹

One friend may be strong and excel in an area where another friend may be quite weak. We can offer to others support and help in some areas, but then turn to another for help in areas in which we are lacking. One should cautiously and carefully make friends. As we shall notice in the Scriptures, there will be those who call themselves a friend who are, in reality, an enemy. We know the devil says he wants to be our friend, but we must avoid him at all costs.

Definitions

Briefly note the definition of two key terms²: “friend” is defined as “close acquaintance, intimate associate, supporter or sympathizer, helpful, reliable.” “Enemy” is defined as “a person who hates another, wishes or tries to injure him; a foe, hostile opponent.”

In the Old Testament and New Testament, there are two words translated “friend” or “companion” referring to a close associate, companion, co-worker.

The word “enemy” or “enemies” is likewise often found in the Scriptures. The devil is an enemy. The Lord faced many foes while He was in the flesh (John 1:14) on earth. The disciples of Christ in the first century had aggressive and bitter enemies who persecuted them severely. The Psalmist frequently pled for deliverance from his enemies (Psm. 6:10; Psm. 7:5; Psm. 9:3-6). Synonyms of enemy would include adversary, opponent, aggressor.

Mankind’s Treatment Of One Another

We live in a hostile, survival-of-the-fittest, do-whatever-is-necessary world. While there are exceptions, many care only about themselves, “No. 1,” and do not care about others. We have heard the horror stories of injured people on the streets of our cities, crying out for help, being ignored and left alone to die. Frequently people are willing

to betray another if it will bring a raise in income, a promotion, etc. Road rage is dominant in our society. The attitude of some is, “You get in my way, slow me down the least bit, and I will run over you and hurt you.”

Tragically our world is not the first to deteriorate to such an evil selfish state. In Noah’s day, “the wickedness of man was great in the earth,” and “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of their horrible, evil ways.

In the Biblical record, we are told of friends (true, genuine, pure) and enemies (evil, wicked, mean, hurtful). We learn what we can and should do. Likewise, we learn what we can, but must not, do to be acceptable to Jehovah God. It must be our fervent desire to do what is best for all mankind. To reach heaven, we must be servants of Jehovah God. **All** are sinful beings in need of a Savior. **All** can be forgiven of our sins, as a result of the shed blood of Christ. **All** should have hearts filled with gratitude that we do not receive what we rightfully deserve, but have mercy and grace from God, which offer us a way to receive salvation from sin. When we understand the loving, forgiving nature of God to His obedient followers, we should surely be eager to forgive others (as God has forgiven us). God has not allowed us to be in the rendering of justice and “vengeance” business. If justice has not been served before the judgment of God, then we can be assured it will all be set straight at that time (Acts 17:31; 1 Pet. 4:17-18; Rom. 14:10-12). Vengeance is to be left unto the Lord (Heb. 10:30; Rom. 12:19).

The grand book of Proverbs offers valuable instruction regarding how we should treat our friends and enemies. In view of the fact that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), the facts, thoughts, sentence sermons, and basic principles found in this

glorious Old Testament volume should be invaluable to all who seek to walk in the way of righteousness and holiness.

The Value And Blessings Of True Friends And Treasured Friendships

The word “friend” is found 95 times, and the word “friends” is found 134 times in the Word of God. There are Biblical examples of friends who were true, helpful, valuable companions. There are also friends (?) who betrayed, slandered, attacked, and even killed others.

Biblical Examples Of True Friends

The apostle Paul enjoyed close friendship with many co-workers. Timothy, Titus, Barnabas and many others were his dear friends. Epaphroditus was Paul’s brother, companion in labour, and fellowsoldier (Phil. 2:25). Precious women were true friends and supporters of Paul as he accomplished much in the Lord’s work (Phil. 4:1-3). Jonathan and David were genuine friends (1 Sam. 18:1-3). Jehovah and Moses spoke as friends (Exod. 33:11). Ruth and Naomi were close and dear friends (Ruth 1:16-18). Elijah and Elisha were affectionate friends (2 Kings 2). Joseph reflected integrity and qualities of true love and friendship when he willingly forgave and loved his brothers who had treated him in such an evil manner (Gen. 37-45). Friends rejoiced when the prodigal son returned home (Luke 15:24). Friends will offer bread to neighbors when the need arises (Luke 11:8). Jesus spoke of Mary, Martha and Lazarus as friends (John 11:5-11).

Biblical Examples Of So-Called Friends

Three Old Testament “friends” of Job were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They came to him in time of great distress as friends. They sat with him for several days.

Then they charged him falsely, attacking him. They hurt him instead of helping as friends (Job 2:11). Job accurately realized that his “inward friends abhorred” him, and that “they whom I loved are turned against me” (Job 19:19).

The Scriptures speak of Amnon in 2 Samuel 13:3, and state that he “had a friend.” Amnon (son of David) loved his sister Tamar. The subtle Jonadab was Amnon’s so-called friend. Jonadab devised a plan to fulfill the evil desires of Amnon to lie with his sister Tamar. Upon her refusal, Amnon forced himself on her. Amnon’s ungodly friend aided him in this sinful action. Men can be destroyed, wrecked by their peers and their influence (Prov. 25:19; Heb. 11:24-26). On the other side of this thought, men can be salvaged, recovered by friendships (2 Sam. 12, Nathan and David). Micaiah became the enemy of the king of Israel, because he did “not prophesy good concerning me” (1 Kings 22:8). Some do not want to hear the truth. Some want to hear only good, sweet, soothing words (even if it is not the whole truth) and be flattered.

A true friend is one who will help, even at great expense in time, energy, or money. A true friend will be there during good and bad times. If comfort is needed, they are there. If strength and uplifting is required, they are there. If a kind, listening ear is the need, they are willing to stop and listen. If chastening or rebuke is needed, they are willing to do what is necessary.

A true friend will not allow one to continue in a direction that will bring tragic, serious consequences, without doing what is possible to help. For example, if a rattlesnake were close by, would a friend just ignore the deadly snake and allow others to suffer? If an explosion is about to occur in a building (gas leak, dynamite, bomb, etc.), would we allow any to enter, without frantically telling them of the impending danger? If a devastating tornado is approaching, would we go about our normal

lives, though others are oblivious to the danger? A friend will eagerly help another physically as well as spiritually.

The sage of old informs us that a friend “loveth at all times” (Prov. 17:17) and will seek to cover a transgression (Prov. 17:9). A friend “must shew himself friendly” and is one who “sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). A true friend will “meddle not” and will not flatter with his lips (Prov. 20:19). A genuine friend is one who will not sing “songs to an heavy heart” (Prov. 25:20). Friends are willing to teach and correct another (Prov. 27:5), even if such initially hurts, to accomplish the desired good (Prov. 27:6). A friend is willing to give “heartly counsel” (Prov. 27:9), even rebuke (Prov. 28:23), and “sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Prov. 27:17).

A simple yet excellent examination that will help each of us is the following: if I were someone else, would I want to be my friend? Would I want to be a close associate with me?

A Few “Do’s” And “Don’ts” Of Being A Genuine Friend

Here are a few practical suggestions, based on facts and principles from Proverbs and related passages, regarding serving one another as a true friend.

1. Do love all men impartially at all times (Prov. 17:17), and be a true friend to others (Prov. 18:24). God loves all men. While some may be closer than others, we are to love everyone. Endeavor to love one another consistently. We must strive to be as our Heavenly Father, without respect of persons (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; John 7:24; Jas. 2:9; 1 Pet. 1:17). A Christian will reflect an attitude of humility that will encourage developing and maintaining friends (Phil. 2:3).

2. Do not repeat confidential or private facts to others. A true friend respects the confidence in which

some things are spoken. By just repeating what may be true and accurate can bring great harm and add to the burdens of others (Prov. 17:9). A talebearer reveals secret things (Prov. 20:19) that should be left alone. Busybodies go about spreading things which they should not (1 Tim. 5:13) and are walking disorderly (2 Thess. 3:11).

3. Do listen (kindly, lovingly, with a sincere concern for the speaker's welfare). Give an attentive ear, and hear what another is feeling and thinking. To assist another requires knowing what is taking place in their lives (whether times of happiness or sorrow). To listen fully to another is a forgotten art. Give undivided and full attention when possible.

4. Do not assume that you always have the "perfect" answer. There is nothing wrong, and it is often the right approach, merely to say, "I don't know what is best right now," or, "I don't know what I would do if I were faced with this situation." Until we have walked down that specific road, we do not **know** how we would react, but can only speculate. We should exercise caution as we say we would do this or that, or feel we could react in a specific manner.

5. Do seek ways to help, strengthen, and encourage one another (Prov. 17:9). Assist one who is burdened in sin to seek forgiveness and thus remove the burden. Offer help to one grieving, sorrowing, mourning. Give assistance to those who need help, even if it is nothing more than a listening ear.

6. Do not boast of personal victories and accomplishments. Put yourself aside and concentrate exclusively on seeking to aid another. Endeavor to prefer one another (Rom. 12:10). Think on the things of others (Phil. 2:4), instead of personal things. Make them feel that they are the only one you care about for that moment. They are important.

7. Do speak in a positive, edifying, honest, and sincere manner. Praise those who are doing good. Offer support to those with heavy hearts (Prov. 25:20). Do not deceive (Prov. 24:28; Prov. 27:5), flatter (Prov. 28:23), meddle in private affairs (Prov. 20:19). Christians are to be honest in all they do (Rom. 13:13). Insincerity and dishonesty will damage or destroy a friendship ever so quickly. One does not want to be a friend with one they cannot trust.

8. Do not insult or injure another by discounting their pain. What may seem insignificant to one often is major to another. Do not trivialize how your friend is feeling, reacting, or thinking. Allow time for grief and recovery when a loss has been experienced. Be kind and considerate.

9. Do all you can to “be there” when needed. Consider how much another’s presence is appreciated when you are the one receiving the favor. Sometimes just being present, listening, expressing your concern and love is worth more than gold, silver, or ointment and perfume (Prov. 27:9). A brother is there for adversity (Prov. 17:17). A neighbor that is near (Prov. 27:10) is better than a brother far off.

10. Do not forsake your friends, turning your back on them, when times are good or bad. Give others the benefit of the doubt, thinking positively, optimistically of them. A friend “sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). When the task at hand is unpleasant, dirty, distasteful, do not abandon your friend. The apostle Paul was “oft refreshed” by the house of Onesiphorus, and Paul added that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of his chain (burdens, bonds, difficulties) (2 Tim. 1:16). Give of yourself unselfishly, serving others even as our Lord ministered to others (Matt. 20:28). I will take the words of John F. Kennedy and slightly modify them to

apply to God's servant today: "Ask not what others can do for you. Ask what you can do for others."

11. Do pray at any time, for anyone, at any place. It is never inappropriate to pray (either with others vocally or silently). Little effort is required to speak against another, to slander or gossip about another, or even to injure them. But it requires courage, determination to please God by complete obedience to His Word and to pray for them. It is difficult (if not impossible) to hate another while on your knees praying for them (Matt. 5:44; cf. Acts 7:60; Luke 23:34).

12. Do not judge (without knowing the facts, and, even then, "judge righteous judgment"—John 7:24). While not condoning evil or neglectful actions, seek to "bend over backward" to understand the facts and to grasp even the extenuating circumstances. What may appear obvious at first may **not** be the real situation at all.

13. Do maintain a Christ-like attitude and action. Do not stoop to the level of the ungodly and evil ones. It would be easy to bite back, bark out offenses toward the attacker, speak hurtful words to the one hurting you. Instead, follow the Lord's example as He "reviled not again" when He was reviled, and did not threaten others when He was threatened (1 Pet. 2:23; Acts 20:28), but silently and willingly suffered and died that we might be saved.

14. Do not overstay your welcome. According to the circumstances, carefully evaluate the length of time with another. Judgment is difficult at times.

God's Faithful Will Have Enemies

The apostle Paul had many enemies. He specifically mentioned some as those who did him much harm (such as Alexander the coppersmith—2 Tim. 4:14). Paul asked the Galatians, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because

I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). Stephen had enemies, and they stoned him to death (Acts 7:58). Saul of Tarsus breathed out threatenings and slaughters (Acts 9:1) against Christians [before his conversion (Acts 9), and then serving the Lord faithfully]. The Lord Himself made people upset, angry, and they became His bitter enemies, who ultimately crucified the Son of God. He was despised and rejected (Matt. 27:39ff). He was forsaken by His own followers (Matt. 26:56). He was betrayed and denied (Matt. 26:48-75). He was mocked (Luke 23:11).

Enemies are a reality to the faithful follower of God in our lives as well. In fact, the inspired Word warns us to be concerned when we do not have enemies (Luke 6:26). Paul informed Timothy that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). In Romans 12:14 he added, “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.”

The Lord said:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:11-12).

Our Lord further urged His disciples to love, do good, bless and pray for their enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). This was what the Divine Son of God did Himself. In fact, has there ever been a greater demonstration of love and godliness than when our Lord prayed for His executioners (Luke 23:34)? We are to follow His example (1 Pet. 2:21).

To follow God completely includes having no fellowship with the world of darkness (Eph. 5:11). Christians have come out from the world and are to be separate (2 Cor. 6:17). It means we will not love the world nor the things of the world (1 John 2:15-17). God’s people

are not “friends” of the world (Jas. 4:4). The Lord’s kingdom, of which we are a part, is not of this world (John 18:36).

At times, it is good to have enemies. One should eagerly consider those who are evil, wicked, servants of Satan as their enemy! We are on opposite sides. We have nothing in common with those who seek ungodliness. It is a fact: you can know something about another by the friends (associates) he enjoys. It is also a fact that you can know something about another by the enemies he has.

Whether due to what the Christian teaches, how the follower of God lives, what he refuses to do and say, we can prepare ourselves for and know that enemies will exist.

How Should We Treat An Enemy?

The Lord has directly answered this provoking question, as recorded in the Gospel record according to Matthew:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:43-48).

Jesus tells us to love our enemies. It is not an optional matter. We are not at liberty to choose which enemies we are willing to love. The reason for this action is clearly detailed in the same passage: “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” Your Father has many

bitter enemies. He is loving, kind, forgiving, and willing to love even the most unlovable. We who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb must be like our Father (as near as possible) in all ways.

It is very easy to love those who love you. It is easy enough to love those who are unknown to you. But it is most difficult to love those who are evil and mean to you; who seek to harm and injure you; who speak lies, slanders, and gossip about you; who want to destroy you. It will never be easy to “turn the other cheek” (Luke 6:29), but it is still an instruction of the Lord that must be followed. While we are expected to “love” others (even our enemies), it does not mean we must “like” everyone. The Lord Himself “loved” His apostles, all of them. But is it not possible that He was closer to (“liked”) Peter, James, and John? Love means that we treat others lovingly and kindly because of who they are (creatures in the image of God—Gen. 1:26-27), and their value (worth more than the whole world—Matt. 16:26).

From the Old Testament, we learn that the good and kind actions of David to Saul (one who had done him great personal wrong) touched Saul, and he tenderly summarized, “Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil” (1 Sam. 24:17). David’s actions were righteous, while Saul’s were evil.

Among the first thoughts that should come to our mind in seeking an answer to the question, “How Should We Treat Our Enemies?” are the Lord’s words found in the Sermon on the Mount, known by most as the Golden Rule: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12). In what way do we want to be treated? Then let us treat others that same way. How do we want others to speak to us? Then we should speak

to others in that exact way. Including those who are “enemies” of the child of God, or even “enemies” of the cross of Christ, we reflect the mind and spirit of Christ when we love them in spite of their evil ways, when we pray for them, bless them and do good to them. To the evil ones who crucified the Son of God, the Savior prayed “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34).

The wise Solomon (by inspiration) further gives us direction regarding how we should treat our enemies. We must not rejoice “when thine enemy falleth” (Prov. 24:17). Such an attitude will only hurt the one who possesses it. It will not reflect the Golden Rule, nor will it represent the Savior. A Christian will not return evil for evil, saying “I will do so to him as he hath done to me” (Prov. 24:29). The childish-sounding words of “He hit me first” are **not** the way mature, obedient children of God are to act. Others will hurt us, injure us, but that does **not** give us license to retaliate and hurt them. God does not want us to seek to “recompense evil” (Prov. 20:22). Thus, as the Lord did while on earth, as the inspired record instructs us regarding the treatment of enemies, we are to do good, speak words of blessings, and pray for them.

Is this an easy command? Is it easy to be calm when tempted to erupt in anger toward those who speak evil and do harm to you? **No**, it is difficult. It requires great effort. But it is possible. Our Lord is our example. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). We are to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-8). Simon Peter encourages us not to be ashamed as we “suffer as a Christian,” but instead we are to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16). Regardless of the trials, burdens, enemies, persecutors, etc., we are to be “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10), enduring to the end (Matt. 10:22), realizing that the glory to come is worth everything (Rom. 8:16-18).

Consider the instruction given in Proverbs 25:21-22: “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.” In the previous chapter (Prov. 24:17-18), Solomon states that we are not to rejoice or be glad when our enemy falls (stumbles). He says that, if we did this, the Lord would be displeased. In Proverbs 25 he instructs us to go the second mile (cf. Matt. 5:41), not only not to rejoice if an enemy stumbles, but to take care of the physical needs of an enemy also.

The thoughts found in Proverbs 25:21-22 are similar to the words of Christ as recorded in Matthew 5:44: “bless them that curse you, do good to them that hurt you.” Solomon says to offer bread and water to your enemy when he is hungry and thirsty. Do not deny him, nor rejoice because an enemy has such need. But give unto him as he has need, and, in so doing, you will “heap coals of fire upon his head.” Our reward will come from the Lord. Our reward must not focus on earthly matters, earthly satisfactions.

The apostle Paul offers the powerful words of the above quote (Prov. 25:21-22) in writing to the church at Rome (Rom. 12:20), and then adds, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).

Instead of returning evil for evil, if possible, set a goal of making friends out of your enemies. Pray for them. If a conflict or disagreement has brought about the present state, seek a resolution to the problem. At times, it is good to “suffer wrong” willingly (1 Cor. 6:7) for the sake of peace, harmony, and the salvation of souls. How sweet it would be to walk together toward glory!

If all efforts fail to make a friend of an enemy, continue to pray for him. But (as the apostle Paul demonstrated, Acts 18:6) there may be times when you need to “shake off the dust” from your feet (Mark 6:11) and go onward.

Remember also that Satan is our enemy. He aggressively and viciously seeks to destroy us. He wants us to hate, not love; do evil, not good; return hatred to those who hate us; not pray for, but pray against our enemies. He wants us to be lost eternally in hell.

Is Confronting An Enemy An Unfriendly Or “Unloving” Action?

Confronting another, in a constructive way, with the intention of assisting that individual toward heaven, is not an unfriendly or “unloving” action. It is very possible that confronting an enemy would be the greatest expression of love possible.

Solomon stated, “Open rebuke is better than secret love” (Prov. 27:5). Hearty counsel by a friend is sweet (Prov. 27:9), if not offered with a loud voice (Prov. 27:14). Rebuke from a friend can find favor, much more so than flattering, empty words (Prov. 28:23). A true friend will offer corrective advice and counsel to those who are beginning to falter, becoming entangled again in the world, falling away (2 Pet. 2:20-22; Gal. 5:4). Such action is not just seeking to hurt, just being picky, or fault-finding. On the contrary, it is action with the specific desire of spiritual benefit. The “faithful wounds” of a friend will hopefully bring good results, as a shot of penicillin might hurt at the time but will actually bring healing. In Hebrews 12:11 we are reminded that “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Biblical examples abound of those who specifically detailed doctrines and/or named others who were evil workers, false teachers, enemies of the cross. We remember the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, doctrine of Balaam, false teaching on the resurrection, etc. that are itemized in Holy

Writ. Aquila and Priscilla were not unloving when they took Apollos aside to teach him the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:24-26). It is **not** unloving or un-Christian to call names of those who are “walking disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6). Obviously, the motive must be Christ-like. Possessing the wrong motive could make a right action become something evil and wrong.

Associate With True Friends And Avoid Enemies

It is correct to seek deliverance from enemies. The Psalmist asked God to deliver him from his enemies (Psm. 59:1). To “have no fellowship” means to get away from, avoid (Eph. 5:11). Paul told the Romans to “avoid them” who caused divisions and offenses. Be reminded that none can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39). Understand that we can do all things through Christ (Phil. 4:13) and that we can survive whatever trials we face (1 Cor. 10:13). We have the right to be confident that we can overcome evil (Eph. 6:10-18). Paul’s prayer was to be delivered from evil (2 Tim. 4:18), and he realized the Lord would preserve him. Paul was willing to do his part and trusted God to do the rest (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Conclusion

With a minimum of knowledge of the Bible, we **know** we do not want to be an enemy of Jehovah God. God is not only a God of love, compassion, kindness, but is also a God of vengeance (Rom. 3:5) and consuming fire (Heb. 12:29).

We sincerely and passionately desire to be a friend of God. Like Abraham of old, a “friend of God” (Jas. 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7), we desire to walk daily with Him throughout this earthly journey toward heaven. Abraham was not a “friend” of God by accident. He

believed in God. He believed and obeyed the instructions from God (demonstrated by a journey to a place unknown to him, his willingness to offer his son as a sacrifice on an altar, etc.).

Our God is able (2 Cor. 9:8; Heb. 7:25; Jer. 10:10). He is our strength and refuge (Heb. 6:18; Psm. 91:2; Jer. 16:19). With God, all things are possible (Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27). With these foundational facts, we **know** our enemies should not disturb, distract, or destroy us. We **know** we can be a “friend” of God while we live on earth (by following His will for man), and then, in the by and by, we can be with Him forever (John 14:1-3; Rev. 21:4; Matt. 25:46). We can be victorious (1 Cor. 15:57) and receive the crown (Rev. 2:10).

Endnotes

1 Leroy Brownlow, **The Christian’s Everyday Problems.**

2 **New World Dictionary**, College edition.



About The Author

Preaching since 1961, married to LaDon (Vick), four daughters (one deceased) and four grandchildren. Local preaching TN, AL. Presently works with the East Hill church of Christ in Pulaski, Tenn. Editor, *Truth In Love* evangelistic publication. Director of the annual *Truth In Love Lectureship* in Pulaski, Tennessee. Owner of Sain Publications.

This page left intentionally blank

Part Two

**Man's
Relationship
To His
Family**

CHAPTER 8

Husband/Wife Relationship

Keith Mosher, Sr.

Preface

I *WAS THE LOCAL PREACHER* for the beloved Southaven Church of Christ for seven years, starting in 1980, and every year that I return for the annual **POWER** Lectureship (which started the year after I left) I learn of another sweet sister or dear brother in Christ who is suffering from or has suffered from some terrible sickness or tragedy. Such good people of God are not immune to the ravages of this life, and so I hear of their severe difficulties and I pray and—I weep. I miss all of those who are already in paradise, and I mourn for those now undergoing their trials. Therefore, I want to dedicate this lecture to all those whom I have known who are either deeply missed or who are in my constant prayers. May our Father in heaven hold each one of these dear brothers and sisters in the palm of His gracious hand, and may they remember to cast their burdens on Him. These are my two desires for the great members at Southaven.

Introduction

One informed psychologist has written:

All too often, people marry before acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to take care of

their mates: to meet their emotional, mental and physical needs. One of the ironies in our society is that a person has to have four years of training to receive a plumber's license, but absolutely no training is required for a marriage license. Our educational system doesn't even require communication courses basic to the meaningful development of any relationship. As a result, many men and women enter marriage with virtually no knowledge of how to meet the **basic** (sic) emotional and mental needs of their mates.¹

The above-stated difficulty points out an universal need for every married couple—understanding one another! Perhaps this brief study of the Proverbs concerning husbands and wives will aid each to begin the efforts (or continue the efforts) necessary to more meaningful relationships.²

The study here is divided (because of the assigned passages) into three areas: (1) finding a mate (Prov. 18:22; Prov. 19:14; Prov. 24:3-4);³ (2) staying faithful and growing in the relationship (Prov. 5:15-19; Prov. 27:8); (3) dealing with out-of-control relationships (Prov. 15:17; Prov. 17:1; Prov. 19:13; Prov. 21:9; Prov. 21:19; Prov. 25:24; Prov. 27:15-16). Since the Proverbs deal with wisdom, the suddenly wise will take note that there are several more passages dealing with the troubled nature of some marriages! The wisdom writers, therefore, were inspired to know how much work is needed to maintain a marriage over the long haul.

Finding A Mate

The wisdom is that “whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord” (Prov. 18:22). The foregoing verse harmonizes with, “For whoso findeth me [wisdom, KM] findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord” (Prov. 8:35). Therefore, it is a wise **and** good thing to be married, for “A good man obtaineth favour of the Lord: (Prov. 12:2).

The phrase “a good thing” (Prov. 18:22, referring to the wife one finds) is most likely the Hebrew for “well-favoured.”⁴ Therefore, the good man, as he **ought** to be, will find a good woman, as she **ought** to be.⁵

In later Hebrew expression, a well-favored person was thought of as one who had a “good disposition,” which idea is expressed in Proverbs 19:14: “House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord.” The term “prudent” in this latter verse (*shecal*) is the property of modesty and virtue, as in “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10).⁶

From the above verses, one can conclude that no truly godly home can be built on anything other than the wisdom that originates from Jehovah. Therefore, the inspired wisdom writer instructed that “Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches” (Prov. 24:3-4). In fact, God has said that “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands” (Prov. 14:1). The good man who finds a good woman is following the wisdom that is rooted in the awe of God (Prov. 1:7). Wilmeth wrote:

Why marry? is a good question. We could give reasons such as these: married people, both men and women, live longer than people who do not marry and the suicide rate is considerably lower among married persons than among those who are not married. But such reasons, though proved facts, seem rather silly to present as reasons why we should marry. Actually then to ask the question “why marry?” is about as sensible as to ask “why eat?” ...Marriage is the relationship wherein two people can come to know each other so fully that they come to be a unit rather than two individuals going their own separate ways while living together.⁷

With the above author, one could add that God's wisdom promises that finding the right mate will lead to becoming **one** (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5):

As a small boy, my task, often, was to go to the cellar beneath our house and to bring back a jar of some or other canned goods my mother placed there. The "cellar" was not a basement, had a dirt floor, was dark, and usually filled with cobwebs. It was a scary place for a small lad. On one occasion Mom sent me for a jar of preserves. I raced into the cellar, grabbed a small jar off of the shelf I knew always held the jams and preserves and ran back up to the house with the treasure. When Mom opened that jar, she discovered that it had been so long on the shelf that it had completely turned again to sugar!⁸

What is the point of the above story? If one seeks a godly mate according to God's wisdom, and if one **works** at the marriage and one's relationship to God, the longer the couple "stays on the shelf," the **sweeter** will their bonding be. Their marriage can turn "completely" to sugar as they become one!

There must be, then, some prerequisites in finding that godly mate who will make life sweet. In the first place, God instructs that children should not get married and that only self-sufficient adults are ready to walk the wedding aisle (Matt. 19:5).⁹ Men and women, according to God, should look to marry those who are personally going to seek the church **first** and thus are enablers and not hinderers in helping the other person get to heaven (Matt. 6:33). Sociological studies are indicating that children remain in adolescence even into their twenties (which fact may account for the nearly eighty-percent divorce rate among teenagers) and so such young people are not ready to "leave father and mother."¹⁰

In the second place, one planning to marry an adult Christian will have to date one. Two who are married are

partners, will eventually be **fathers** and **mothers**, and will affectionately provide comfort, love, shelter, food, warmth, and training for any children. Such efforts as the latter require **teamwork**, and it is most obvious that, unless both partners are Christians, pulling together as a twosome will be much more difficult.¹¹

In the third place, the attitude one takes into marriage will have much to do with the success or failure of the union. Some take marriage very lightly and have a “we’ll try it, and if it doesn’t work to our liking, we’ll divorce” attitude. Others have a “what’s in it for me, you meet all **my** needs” idea about being married, and the naive seem to think that being wedded “does something wonderful and changes everyone’s habits and actions.” Others, who are too young emotionally to be married, seem to think that they are transferring being protected by their parents to being protected by their mates. However, marriage is a **human** endeavor and will fail or succeed only when hard work, common sense, and loving the other in terms of service (1 Cor. 13:1-7) abound. Remember that “Houses and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent [well-dispositioned, KM] wife is from the Lord” (Prov. 19:14).

When the emotionally and spiritually immature enter marriage, unless immediate efforts are made to grow, then most likely that marriage will end in divorce. However one views it, divorce is failure—“the failure of two people in one of the most important areas of human relations.”¹²

Staying Faithful And Growing In The Relationship

The wisdom writer was inspired to commend conjugal love and to invite his readers to participate in that romantic state in life in a holy manner:

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love (Prov. 5:15-19).

The admonition from God's wisdom concerning the sexual state is described as monogamous: "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place" (Prov. 27:8). Collins indicates:

Several years ago, a group of researchers interviewed people who had sought help for some kind of problem...[A]lmost half of those surveyed reported that the problems centered around their marriages.¹³

[A]t times **most** [emp. mine throughout, KM] couples have sexual problems; at times these are the result of other marital tensions...In this age of women's liberation and the reevaluation of traditional sex roles, there often is conflict over what it means to be a man or woman.¹⁴

God's wisdom is that one **real** man should marry one **real** woman for life (Gen. 2:24). In fact, God instructs that He **hates** divorce and that the partners **must** maintain a lifetime sexual commitment:

And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously (Mal. 2:15-16).

To those who read and/or study the Bible, it has become obvious that certain features are inherent in marriage and eternal in their consequences. One feature, marital fidelity, is the one in fact that, when broken, allows for remarriage after divorce (and the **only** one). God wants each man and woman to “drink waters out of thine own cistern.” Hampton wrote:

Some interesting facts about marriage recently came to the church office. One was from the **Wall Street Journal**, March 11, 1990. It said, “Marry once and stay married is still the rule among top executives.” Of 1700 surveyed by UCLA’s Graduate School of Management and Korn/Ferry International, 95% are presently married only once. The vast majority—82%—said their spouses don’t hold jobs. Bobby Key has preached for a congregation in Miami, Florida, for the last 25 years. He reports the following statistics for that quarter century: Seventy young Christians married non-Christians. Of those, 70% have fallen from the faith. Of the 21 who remained faithful only 12 converted their mates and of the 70 marriages, 19 ended in divorce. **All** of the divorces were because of fornication on the part of at least one partner.¹⁵

Such statistics as brother Hampton reports above can be multiplied by the millions. What about God’s instructions? Are they worth pursuing? Should one drink from one’s own cistern?

One drinks to quench one’s thirst, and thus the sexual appetite is explained by Proverbs 5:15-19 as a created, inborn impulse without any reference to how sin pollutes that natural course. The New Testament instruction from the apostles is that, in order to avoid burning in one’s lust, one should **marry** and maintain that role (1 Cor. 7:9-11). Since the wisdom writer focuses on the husband’s role, that penman refers to the wife as a “fountain” or “cistern” (Prov. 5:15). The two figures of speech refer to her as the

pit out of which children are born. The lifetime wife is to be the **only** source of such offspring (cf. Gen. 26:25). In fact, children born out of wedlock (i.e., from fornication with another while one is married) will not belong to the husband alone, and he may not even know to whom such a child belongs (Prov. 5:17).

The “hind” and the “roe” of Proverbs 5:19 are often used in Hebrew (and Arabic) poetry as symbols of beauty.¹⁶ The term “satisfy” (Prov. 5:19, *achvim*) signifies sensual love, even in its erotic nature (Prov. 7:18). Since God’s wisdom demands that man’s erotic impulses be fulfilled in a monogamous manner, God everywhere condemns fornication and adultery (cf. Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9).¹⁷ In God’s eyes, then, “until death do us part” is **not** an insignificant phrase (Matt. 19:6). One’s eternal destiny is involved in remaining sexually faithful to the wife of one’s youth. In order to maintain fidelity and still enjoy romance over a lifetime, some suggestions of such good practices are mentioned here as follows.

Since wisdom dictates that one be “satisfied” with one’s mate (Prov. 5:20), one must prioritize one’s spouse as second only to the Godhead (Eph. 5:23-32). It takes great patience to grow a marriage, and experience and courage to discover the **ever-changing** needs of another person.¹⁸ Husbands and wives should never forget how they attracted each other in the first place. Therefore, it is suggested that husbands and wives have “dates” with each other every week.¹⁹ Expensive dates are not necessary, but time with each other **is**. The purpose or goal of such times is to become best friends with one’s partner. Those with children need to learn that the offspring are **not** the core of the family—get a babysitter and do something together. Faulkner writes:

There is a temptation on the part of parents to allow the relationship with the children to come before the relationship of husband and wife with

each other. But they must not allow this to happen. If children become the very center of the family, it is hard for parents to let them grow up and develop their own independent identities. And when the children finally do grow up and go away, the parents may find little of their own relationship remaining.²⁰

Husbands and wives must remember to “satisfy” one another with that morally permissible love-ecstasy that intensifies happiness in marriage (Prov. 5:19).

A second suggestion is that husbands learn how their wives process information and, vice-versa, that wives learn how husbands process the same data. A woman will react to external words **emotionally** first and logically second, since she operates from **both** hemispheres of the brain simultaneously. The male will react to data **logically** first, since he has been programmed by a wash of testosterone over the left hemisphere of his brain prior to birth as designed by God.²¹ The left-brain male thus thinks it peculiar how “silly” the female is, and the female wonders how he can be so “insensitive”! These latter facts may be behind Peter’s admonition that one should dwell with one’s spouse “according to knowledge” (1 Pet. 3:7). What the foregoing facts mean in a practical way is that women respond to audible messages and that men must **tell** them they are needed. Males respond, however, to constant “pats on the back,” or, as Paul puts it, that the “wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph. 5:33).

A third suggestion comes from Dobson, who writes:

[E]very husband and wife should seek to keep the romantic fires aglow in the relationship, by the use of love notes, surprises, candlelit dinners, and unexpected weekend trips, among other possibilities.²²

[C]ouples must reserve some of their time and energy for meaningful sexual activity.²³

Perhaps this section of this study should include Proverbs 5:20-21: “And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.”

The third suggestion above reminds one that “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). A study done in 1980 noted that **single** males committed ninety percent of the violent crimes in America, including ninety-five percent of the burglaries, ninety-four percent of drunken driving offenses, seventy percent of suicides, ninety-one percent of sexual offenses, and that single males are less responsible about their bills at nearly double the rate compared to married males.²⁴ Since the single male is so often a threat to society, probably because his aggressive tendencies have no outlet, the beauty of God’s plan for marriage is seen: “When a man ‘falls in love’ with a woman, dedicating himself to care for her and protect her, he suddenly becomes the mainstay of social order.”²⁵ God’s wisdom from the Proverbs is therefore confirmed even by societal statistics. Marriage, strong marriage, contributes even to the strength of civilization when the spouse does **not** become as “a man that wandereth from his place” (Prov. 27:8).

Dealing With “Out Of Control” Relationships

The Proverbs under consideration in this last point of the study are listed here in block form so that the reader may note the similarity and the wisdom in these pithy messages from God:

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith (Prov. 15:17).

Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife (Prov. 17:1).

A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping (Prov. 19:13).

It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house (Prov. 21:9).

It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman (Prov. 21:19).

It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house (Prov. 25:24).

A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike (Prov. 27:15).

Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself (Prov. 27:16).

Keil translates Proverbs 15:17 as “better a dish of cabbage and love with it, than a fatted ox together with hatred.”²⁶ Love or hatred can be, according to one’s disposition, the very spirit of a marriage (cf. Prov. 17:1). In this latter proverb (Prov. 15:17), the spirit or attitude of the family is better with “quietness” and little to eat than with “prime rib” (“sacrifices” or “slain beast,” meaning plenty to eat) and tremendous **strife** (Hebrew: “hatred,” *mileh*). The wisdom writer equates a troubled marriage with a house full of terrible tumult and quarrel, fueled by excess and broken relationships. A country-western song perhaps typifies the lack of connection between too many husbands and wives, which lack causes strife in the marriage:

Put another log on the fire; cook me up some
bacon and beans; And go out to the car and
change the tire; Wash my socks and sew my old
blue jeans. Now don't I let you wash the car on
Sunday? Don't I warn you when you're getting
fat? Ain't I a gonna take you fishin someday?

Well, a man can't love a woman more than that. Ain't I always nice to your kid sister? Don't I take her drivin' every night? So, sit here at my feet, cause I like you when you're sweet. And you know it ain't feminine to fight. [The chorus, KM, after each four lines is as follows.] Come on, Baby; you can fill my pipe, and then go fetch my slippers; and boil me another pot of tea. Then put another log on the fire, Babe, and come and tell me why you're leavin' me.²⁷

The clues to the communication breakdowns in marriages are subtle, yet can be recognized so that hatred and strife as described in the Proverbs do not frequently, if ever, occur. How often the couple touches (holds hands, etc.), how often they smile at one another, how often there are frequent phone calls to “girl friends” by her or frequent “hunting trips” for him, how often there is just a need to “talk to someone” are all signs of frustrations between couples.²⁸ A brief summary of methods to facilitate better communications is given here: (1) Males and females **must** recognize the significant differences between them. There are **five** meaningful differences. (a) Men tend to express facts; women express intuition or emotion. (b) Men need solutions; women love to give sympathy. (c) Men are generally objective; women are more likely to be personal. (d) Men separate their identities from their surroundings; women identify with such. (e) Men tend to generalize; women tend to detail.

(2) Women must learn that they have a **natural** desire for a **good** relationship but that men must work at even recognizing a good relationship. Men can ask **three** helpful questions here. (a) What kind of marriage do **we** want? (b) Where is my marriage today? (c) What will it take to reach **our** marriage goals?

(3) Men and women, especially men, need **four** essential qualities to enhance their relationships. (a) There needs to be a sense of **helping** one another to reach a

goal. Too often he wants to “conquer” the problem of “getting a better marriage” and then desires to move on to some other problem. She must **honor** his need here by helping him remember that this sense of **helping** is a lifetime process. (b) There needs to be the knowledge that one marries the whole history of a person and not some immature, idealized version. Real love is a fact-finding mission on what one’s partner needs to flourish. (c) Men and women, especially women, need security in the home. The lack of feeling safe and trusting causes strife about insignificant things. (Everyone goes through tough times, but the truly committed couple rises above the incidental.) (d) Men and women need **meaningful** talking. Men must learn how to share feelings and that listening and talking to her is like water to a plant. She must learn not to use her 250,000 facial expressions to make him feel inadequate by making him think “he should know!” She must learn, as he must, that neither speaks the language of the other naturally. (Because men and women do not know how to listen and talk to their spouses, many spend years looking for someone who does!)

The second section of the Proverbs listed above (Prov. 19:13; Prov. 21:9; Prov. 21:19; Prov. 25:24; and Prov. 27:15-16) all deal with a “contentious” woman. Contentious (Hebrew: *mcdovim*, “quarrelsome”) women or quarrelsome men are a vexation to any relationship, but especially so in a marriage. Since there is a spiritual law of sowing and reaping, one who sows strife reaps the same, and one who sows love will gather much love. Sadly, the world’s message is that one needs to be “lovable,” but God’s wisdom is that the one who loves is loved in return (1 Cor. 13:13). What is it that leads to strife in relationships? Anger. And the “mother” of anger is self-pity, while the “daughter” of anger is depression (cf. Phil 2:14).

Anger is not necessarily evil. One can be “angry and sin not” (Eph. 4:26), but anger unleashed can never work

that which is right (Jas. 1:20). Anger becomes sinful in two ways, and both hurt relationships. One can **ventilate** (i.e., “blow-up”), which hurts self and others, or one can **internalize** (i.e., “clam up”), which leads self to depression. Therefore, God’s wisdom is that “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls” (Prov. 25:28). What can one do to overcome contentiousness (i.e., anger)?

Inspiration had the apostle Paul write, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:26-27). Contentious marriage partners need to practice focusing their anger on the problem instead of a person. One asks one’s partner (confronts if necessary) to be involved in the solution, which solution is a **redirection** of the anger. One can point out areas where the person has learned to control his quarrelsome nature (for example, with a boss) so that the angry one sees that what he deems **important** enough is that time when he manages to be under control. And all married partners can ask themselves, “Is my marriage important enough to control my temper?”²⁹

Note, now, Proverbs 27:16: “Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.” Trying to **restrain** a quarrelsome partner is like trying to hide the wind and to hold oil in one’s hand! Such efforts, per God’s wisdom, are lies told to self and can never bring the relationship of two people to a happy conclusion. Solutions **must** be sought (perhaps through counseling), and anger and contentiousness must not be hidden but admitted, repented of, and confessed (cf. 1 John 1:9). Tournier wrote:

We must be reminded that the first condition for mutual understanding is the desire for, the seeking after, and the willing of that understanding. Such a statement may appear

very commonplace. Nevertheless, this basic attitude toward understanding others is far rarer than we think. Listen to all the conversations of our world, those between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf. Each one speaks primarily in order to set forth his own ideas, in order to justify himself, in order to enhance himself and to access others...Everyone whose hopes are not fulfilled is naturally inclined toward blaming others for his setbacks: it's the other fellow's fault.³⁰

Perhaps the need most often missing in quarrelsome marriages is **submission**—to Christ and each other (Eph. 5:21-32). Imagine a wife who does not even know whether her husband believes in anything (and vice-versa, if the wife is not a believer) trying to deal with a mate who is not in submission to Christ and certainly not to the marriage. The Proverbs writers were right that it would take living in a very large house to get away from such a situation (Prov. 25:24). Perhaps memorizing the following beatitudes for husbands and wives will be the start of trying to make their marriages better, happier, quieter relationships.

1. Blessed are the husband and wife who continue to be affectionate, considerate, and loving after the wedding bells have ceased ringing.
2. Blessed are the husband and wife who are as polite and courteous to one another as they are to their friends.
3. Blessed are they who have a sense of humor, for this attribute will be a handy shock absorber.
4. Blessed are the married couples who abstain from alcoholic beverages.
5. Blessed are they who love their mates more than any other person in the world, and who joyfully fulfill their marriage vows of a lifetime of fidelity and mutual helpfulness to each other.

6. Blessed are they who remember to pray and study the Bible together.
7. Blessed are they who become parents, but who remember that the children are an heritage from the Lord and not the whole of marriage.
8. Blessed are those mates who never speak loudly to each other, and who make their homes places of encouragement.
9. Blessed are those mates who can work out their differences together in God's kingdom.
10. Blessed are the husband and wife who worship and work together in God's kingdom.
11. Blessed is the couple who has complete understanding about mutual ownership and handling of things financial.
12. Blessed are the husband and wife who humbly submit themselves and their homes to Christ and each other.

Conclusion

Surely, when a man is what he ought to be before God then, "he who findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord" (Prov. 18:22; Prov. 19:14; Prov. 24:3-4). And when the partners remain sexually faithful and learn the significant differences between males and females, the marriage grows and abounds in happiness (Prov. 5:15-19; Prov. 27:8). Sadly, God's wisdom recognizes that some relationships are a vexation of the spirit, but God has **solutions** even for such problems when sought by those willing to humble themselves (Prov. 15:17; Prov. 17:1; Prov. 19:13; Prov. 21:9; Prov. 21:19; Prov. 25:24; Prov. 27:15-16). May God bless the preachers and elders of the Southaven church of Christ for taking the lead in these studies of God's wisdom and especially as here applied to the most sublime relationship on earth—marriage.

Endnotes

1 Gary Smalley with Steve Scott, "**For Better Or For Best**," Revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 14-15.

2 Some who know me may wonder why this author would dare to teach on the marriage relationship! But, the very fact

that I have such deep needs to study in this area makes this assignment all the more appealing to me. My wife and I have attempted to emerge from the darkness of not being Christians to the light of salvation and happy relationships. Such a journey's tale, hopefully, enables us to be helpful in suggesting to others some ways to achieve good and lasting bonding between the husband and wife. Too, God through the Proverbs is speaking and not the author.

3 **The Holy Bible**, King James Version (World Publishers). All Scriptural references are to this version unless other wise stated.

4 C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, "Proverbs," in **Commentary On The Old Testament In Ten Volumes**, Volume 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 15.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid, p. 28.

7 P. D. Wilmeth, **Love, Courtship, And Marriage** (Nashville: 20th Century Christian, 1956), p. 31.

8 This was my own experience (Keith A. Mosher, Sr.).

9 It should be noted here that sociologists are insisting today that a great percentage of young people are continuing in adolescence even into their twenties and are not ready for adult responsibilities.

10 See Mirnith, Newman, & Hemfelt, **Passages Of Marriage** (Nashville: Nelson, 1991) for a discussion of this adolescent problem.

11 The author has in his possession an audio tape made by a sister in Christ who married a non-Christian. Her stories of frustration, interference by her husband in her Christian duties, drinking bouts by her husband (which habit passed on to a son), terror when he physically threatened or actually hit her are horrific warnings to those determined to marry that "wild, exciting" young man (or woman) who is **not** a Christian.

12 Wilmeth, p. 33.

13 Gary Collins, **Christian Counseling** (Waco, TX: Word, 1980), p. 169.

14 Ibid, p. 172.

15 Gary C. Hampton, "Marry Once and Stay Married," **Getwell Reminder** (Memphis: Getwell church of Christ, August 26, 1992).

16 Keil & Delitzsch, p. 127.

17 A definition of marriage arises out of the idea that there are such things as fornication and adultery. The Bible does not **explicitly** define marriage, but the definition must be determined so that what constitutes adultery and fornication can be known. Societal rules (governmental law) and the couple's intent define marriage (Gen. 2:24; 1 Pet. 2:13). If one is hesitant to incorporate societal rules in defining marriage, one should

note that, during Bible times, customs did play a part in the wedding (Isaac, Genesis 24; Jacob, Genesis 29; Samson, Judges 14; Ruth, Ruth 4; John 2; Matthew 22; Matthew 25; and Mark 2). Once a couple is legally married, then all other sexual unions are prohibited by God.

18 See Carl Brecheen & Paul Faulkner, **What Every Family Needs** (Austin, TX: Personally published by the author, 1979), pp. 127-28. Brecheen and Faulkner recommend that those not willing to take the time necessary to nurture romance should remain single.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid, p. 129.

21 Collins, pp. 420ff.

22 James C. Dobson, **Straight Talk To Men And Their Wives** (Waco, TX: World Books, 1980), p. 125.

23 Ibid.

24 George Gilder, **Sexual Suicide** (New York: New York Times Book Club, 1980), p. 7.

25 Dobson, p. 157.

26 Keil & Delitzsch, p. 325.

27 Adapted from Dobson, p. 97.

28 See Charles L. Rassieur, **The Problem** (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978) for a detailed look at avoiding communication breakdowns and the needs that can be met in counseling.

29 A lot of anger in marriage is because of unforgiven hurts. Oftentimes, when one seeks forgiveness, anger from the partner subsides.

30 Paul Tournier, **To Understand Each Other**, trans. John S. Gilmour (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1970), pp. 8-11.



About The Author

Married 38 years to Dorothy, 3 children, 5 grandchildren. Graduate of Memphis School of Preaching. Several degrees: Southern Christian University (B. A., M. A., M. Th.); Harding Graduate School of Religion (D. Min.). Local preaching: MS, TN. Gospel meetings and lectureships in 36 states, Botswana, Africa; Sidney, Australia; Jakarta; Indonesia; Taichung Taiwan; Malaysia; Murmansk, Russia. Author of two workbooks, *Romans* and *Acts*; tract, *Can One Trust His English Bible*; book, *The Book God Breathed* (2 vols.); Currently full-time instructor at Memphis School of Preaching.

CHAPTER 9

Proverbs For Parents

David Brown

Some Necessary Preliminary Observations

F^{AITHFUL MEMBERS OF THE} church of Christ have always recognized the Biblical principle of “restoration” (1 Chron. 15:13-15; Ezra 10:2-3; Neh. 1:9; Neh. 8:5; Neh. 8:8; Neh. 8:12-18; Neh. 13:1-3; Luke 8:11). However, when most brethren employ the term “restoration,” they primarily have in mind returning to the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular as the sole authority from God to man relating to matters of the church (2 Tim. 2:15; Jas. 1:25; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2). Hence, by doing only what the New Testament authorizes, people may be Christians—nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else—members of the church recorded on the pages of the New Testament. Furthermore, in any age, culture, or society (regardless of the technological advancement or the lack of it found therein), and anywhere on earth where men love the truth of the Gospel and are willing to obey it, the Lord’s church can be brought into existence and sustained (Luke 8:11; Luke 8:15; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 2:41-42; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 John 8-11).

While the foregoing is certainly true pertaining to the use of the word “restoration” regarding God’s scheme of redemption, it is also true regarding marriage and the

home, as each one is revealed in the Bible. I know of no more corrupted Divine concepts than those concerning marriage and the home. We, therefore, have as much of an obligation before God to plead for the return to God's blueprint, or pattern, for marriage and the home as God has ordained and revealed them on the pages of the Bible, as we do for the restoration of ancient, pure, primitive, New Testament Christianity. Hence, the Biblical principle of restoration (restoring marriage and the home as God would have it) will be the basis and guiding light for our study of "Proverbs for Parents."

Our Adversary The Devil (1 Pet. 5:8)

As we strive to abide by the teaching of the Bible on anything, we must face the reality that whatever God authorizes, Satan opposes. Whatever God forbids, Satan promotes. Thus, we should expect him to strenuously fight against God's teaching regarding marriage, the home, and the particulars thereof (2 Cor. 2:11).

One favorite device employed so well by Satan in opposing God's way on anything is this: he loves to attack right things, acts, and the like by publishing far and wide the **abuses** of them, as if the abuses were what God authorized or intended. He attempts to make the abused and corrupted thing appear to men to be the thing God has ordained—the genuine article. He then seeks to attack the abuses.

We must also remember that it is impossible to abuse anything that is not right. And, again, things, acts, and/or persons are right only because God authorizes them (Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:21). Also, things, acts, and/or persons are wrong because the Bible does not authorize them or forbids them. **A person cannot abuse a wrong (a sin).** With this point in mind, and to make it as clear as possible, please consider the following questions.

Regarding sins of commission (1 John 3:4):

1. How many times must one fornicate before he abuses the practice?
2. How many murders must one commit before he abuses the act of murder?
3. How many lies must one tell before he abuses lying?

Pertaining to sins of omission (Jas. 4:17):

1. How many times must one fail to obey Hebrews 10:25 before his failure is an abuse of the directive found therein?
2. How many times must one fail to give of his means, as Christians are directed to do in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 and like passages, before his omission constitutes an abuse of the precepts located in the passage?
3. How many times must the church fail to discipline erring members before such an omission constitutes an abuse of the Divine mandates located in 1 Corinthians 5:1ff; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; and so on?

Homosexual Conduct And “Marriages”

At present, and for some time now, in the United States and in many other parts of the world, there has been a concerted and consistent effort to promote homosexuality. Anyone who opposes homosexuality by labeling it for what it is—immoral and perverted conduct—is opposed, maligned, persecuted, and charged with being guilty of bigotry and hate. The freedom to speak out against this immorality is being undermined daily. These characters desire freedom to preach and practice their foul deeds. However, they do not intend for others to have the same freedom to speak out against homosexual beliefs and conduct. Thus, along with their other sins, they are dishonest and hypocritical. Their beliefs and practices undermine God’s plan and design for marriage and the home as revealed in His infallible Word (Matt. 19:4-6).

There is no room in God's plan for homosexual anything, much less homosexual marriages. The people who advocate such things have no respect for the one true and living God Who reveals His will for man only in the words of the Bible. Again, these people are perverted and in reality go against nature in their base conduct (Rom. 1:24-32). Men may decide to invent for themselves such vile and corrupted activity; they may call their sodomy wholesome conduct and just another alternative life style; the laws of the land may approve and make such arrangements legal; the news media may promote their sinful acts as wholesome; but none of these things change the teaching of God's Word regarding what their conduct actually is—sin of the vilest kind (1 John 3:4).

What is our will for them? Our prayer for and work with them is this: to reason with them from the Word of God; thereby persuade them to believe in God the Father, His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of Christ; to repent of homosexuality and all other sins; be baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins; and live faithfully to the Lord in the church of Christ, as the New Testament teaches all to do. The desired end to our work is their gaining eternal life in heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:16; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:1; Heb. 11:6; John 8:24; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 17:30; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). No, we do not hate homosexuals, and we oppose those who would do them bodily harm. However, we beg them by the mercies of Christ to cease their sinful conduct before they die and are lost in a devil's hell (Rev. 21:8). Moreover, we will not be silenced in our opposition to such ungodly conduct and in our efforts to uphold God's will for marriage and the home.

It is therefore the responsibility of all parents to teach and train their children in the roles God has ordained for

males and females. Our children must be taught that homosexuality is sin. The Scriptural sphere of male and female must be exemplified and taught to children.

Added to the foregoing material is the general ignorance, lukewarmness, and outright opposition within the populace toward Biblical teaching on just about anything, but especially marriage, the home, divorce, and remarriage. Thus, one quickly realizes the “hard times” on which Biblical teaching on these matters has fallen. We are, therefore, among other matters pertaining to Bible authority, fighting an “uphill” battle in propagating and defending the Biblical Truth on marriage and the home. This is all the more reason that we must press on and not become discouraged (1 Cor. 15:58).

It is hoped that the foregoing material pertaining to how Satan uses abused things in opposing the genuine article has helped to teach and emphasize a principle that is all too often ignored by a multitude of otherwise good brethren—i.e., again, **God-authorized matters are the only things that can be abused, corrupted or adulterated.** Thus, we can expect Satan to attack the home by magnifying every abuse of marriage and the family by man with a view to discrediting the true teaching of the Bible regarding such. And, in the case of so-called “homosexual marriages,” Satan will seek to lead people to believe that they are as respectable and acceptable as Biblical marriage and the home.

The Characteristics Of A Good Parent

Edwin Markham wrote:

I saw tomorrow look at me
From little children's eyes,
And thought how carefully we would teach
If we were really wise.¹

In this study we will consider the characteristics of a good parent, the importance of wisdom in building godly homes, and what Proverbs has to teach us about disciplining our children (the value of discipline and the consequences of avoiding it). Again, we will treat these matters from the book of Proverbs as God's directives, for so they are (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Prov. 2:1-9).

I want to begin this phase of our study by consulting Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:1-4, respectively, as we strive to investigate the Scriptures to learn what characteristics make good parents. From this study we will have a Divine commentary on the significance and meaning of Proverbs 20:7; Proverbs 20:11; Proverbs 23:24; and Proverbs 24:3-4, which Scriptures have a tremendous bearing on our subject.

Proverbs 22:6

The writer of Proverbs declared, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). From what will the child "when he is old" not depart? The answer is, "the way he should go." But this answer demands that we understand what "the way he should go" means. As the study progresses, the meaning will be given.

Most people seek the meaning of Proverbs 22:6 on the basis of spiritual development alone. This approach in seeking to understand the meaning of the passage is a mistake. Dr. Gary Hall had this to say regarding the Hebrew text of Proverbs 22:6:

A look at the literal Hebrew text is startling. Translated very literally the Hebrew says, "Train a child according to his way; even though he becomes older he will not turn aside from it." What immediately surfaces is that there are no words in the Hebrew for "should go." The Hebrew language can

express “should go” very clearly but it does not do so here. Therefore, though most English translations and many commentators support the traditional translation of this verse, there seems to be little warrant in the Hebrew text for such an understanding. Interestingly, the KJV offered the more literal translation as an alternative in a footnote, a practice not followed by newer English translations.

A close study of the Hebrew text yields the following ideas. The word “train” is translated as such only here, but it is a rare word in Hebrew. It is used elsewhere of dedicating a new house (Deut. 20:5) or of dedicating the temple (1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chron. 7:5). A related noun is used in Numbers for the dedication of the altar (Num. 7:10-11; Num. 7:84; Num. 7:88) and in Nehemiah for the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem (Neh. 12:27). The contextual meaning of the root as used elsewhere should allow the meaning in Proverbs 22 “to dedicate.” A better meaning as suggested by modern Hebrew dictionaries is perhaps “begin”, or “inaugurate.”^[1] [This note is a part of this quote—DPB.] There is little warrant for translating it “train.” Secondly, the idiom, “his way” is ambiguous. The text does not specify if the way is God’s way (assumed in the traditional translation) or the child’s way (suggested by alternate translations). The closest antecedent for “his” in the verse is “child.” To understand God as the antecedent one would have to go back to verse 4. But since the proverbs are independent sayings, it would seem improper to go that far for an antecedent. (I will not comment on the second half of the verse since it offers no surface translation ambiguities.)

Interpretations

An analysis of comments on this verse will uncover at least five possible interpretations of the literal Hebrew.

1. The traditional translation is an interpretation, for it adds some words and ideas that are not in the Hebrew text. Understood in this way the verse is a promise. Where this interpretation began and why it persists is unclear to me, although it is supported by many commentators.

2. A few alternate translations suggest another interpretation. The New Jerusalem translation cited above suggests that “his way” should be understood as the way or aptitude of the child. Some commentators prefer this direction. They see the emphasis to be that a parent should pay careful attention to the individual personalities of their children and educate them according to the method that will best serve individual aptitudes. In this way the best training will take place for each child.^[2] [This footnote is in the quote—DPB.]

3. The old Geneva Bible suggests another nuance, that “his way” means his vocation or trade. This view is supported also by a modern Jewish scholar. It refers to the way in which the child is to spend his life. Whatever occupation he is to later follow he must prepare for it early. This interpretation is based in part on the understanding of “train.” The Hebrew word is the root for the modern Jewish word for “education” and this meaning seems to be read back into the proverb.^[3] [This footnote is in the quote.—DPB]

4. A decidedly minority view is to interpret “his way” quite literally, that is, the self-centered way of the child. Thus the verse would be an ironic warning that if one allows one’s child to be raised in an atmosphere in which he is allowed to follow his own inclinations with no discipline or correction, then he will act the same as an adult. A spoiled, selfish child, given his way

in everything, will turn out to be the same kind of adult.^[4] [This footnote is in the quote.—DPB]

5. A fifth option has been recently suggested. Through a new understanding of several key words, one scholar suggests the verse is referring to formally inaugurating a young squire type into his new responsibilities and calling for him to be educated properly.^[5] [This footnote is in the quote.—DPB]

Context In Proverbs

Is there any way to decide between the above options? A consideration of the broader context in Proverbs will be helpful. It should be first observed that the book of Proverbs is exactly that. It is a collection of instructions and observations on life intended to offer practical guidance. It is not a collection of programmatic pronouncements by God in which [H]e gives eternal promises. Rather, wise sayings of wise men are given as general guidelines for educating the young. These sayings are considered to be true in general but not to be exhaustive. The whole book of Proverbs is designed to guide the young man into maturity and wisdom and faithfulness to God. Its early, long passages are designed to help the young man avoid the two major dangers for him: evil companions and loose women (Prov. 1-9). The major proverbial sections from Proverbs 10 on have many observations about not only how to raise a son, but also on the nature of foolish and rebellious sons. It is recognized that sons can turn out in different ways and great care must be exercised in their rearing. Strong discipline is a must (Prov. 13:24; Prov. 15:32; Prov. 5:7-14; Prov. 23:14). Even with the best of discipline sons can be wise or foolish (Prov. 10:1; Prov. 10:5; Prov. 13:1; Prov. 13:13; Prov. 13:18; Prov. 17:21; Prov. 17:25; Prov. 19:26, etc.). In fact if folly is in the heart, only

strong discipline will drive it out (Prov. 22:15). Discipline is not to be withheld (Prov. 23:13-14). Proverbs 22:6 interpreted as a promise contradicts all the above passages. Reflection on how “way” is used in Proverbs is also helpful. “There is a way that seems right to man, but the end is death” (Prov. 14:12; Prov. 16:25). The way of the fool seems right to him (Prov. 12:15) and the way of the wicked leads them astray (Prov. 12:26). On the contrary the way to life is through discipline and in keeping the way of the instructor (Prov. 16:17; Prov. 6:23; Prov. 8:32). A man plans his own ways and they may seem right but the Lord weighs the heart (Prov. 16:9; Prov. 21:2). In the light of these observations on the “way” it would be quite in context to interpret “his way” in 22:6 as the way that seems right to the child, the way that he plans, the way that he follows, ignoring instruction. The traditional translation imports a moral tone to “way.” The word “way” is used with moral nuances in Proverbs but always with a moral qualifier such as “good”, “righteous”, or “evil”. So it doesn’t seem proper for it to have a moral tone in 22:6.

Conclusion

I would suggest therefore, that we are to understand Prov. 22:6, not as a promise from God for the life long faithfulness of our children, but as a warning. If we allow the child to follow his own inclinations and do not apply discipline and instruction he will turn out to be a selfish, arrogant, inconsiderate adult, following his way which he thinks is right, but which is the way to death. We can translate: “Dedicate (begin) a child to (on) his way, and when/even as he grows old he will not depart from it.”²

The late Guy N. Woods had the following sage comments regarding the meaning of Proverbs 22:6:

(1) The word “train,” means vastly more than to impart instruction. It translates the Hebrew verb *chanak*, the primary meaning of which is to “put in one’s mouth,” and the [sic] figuratively, to *initiate*, to lay the ground work of character, to instill principle. This presupposes the ability of the child to receive the principles taught, and to form them into his character. Parents often fail in their responsibility; but, so do the children; and, regardless of the efforts of the parents if the children do not *receive* the training, and actively assimilate it into their lives, the result is failure. A puny, undeveloped person might listen to lectures on pugilistics all of his days and never become an effective boxer in the ring; a one-legged man may listen to the finest instruction in track, and never be able to run; Both parents and children have responsibility in the training effort, and in the case of failure on the part of either the conclusion which Solomon draws does not follow. Often, two sons in the *same* family, and with equal training, turn out to be vastly different in disposition and character; the one faithful, the other wholly worldly and sinful. This can properly be explained only on the ground of difference in the sons, and not in the training which they received.

(2) The phrase, “in the way he should go,” is often misapplied. The assumption is that it means “in the way of righteousness and the true religion,”—a course which all, both young and old, ought to follow—but this is not what Solomon meant here. The Hebrew phrase from which the words “in the way he should go,” come, means “according to the tenor of his way,” that is, in harmony with his disposition, his natural talents, and his individual character. Taught here is the obligation of parents to study the nature and disposition of their children and to train them accordingly. This is in harmony with Paul’s instructions to the Ephesians and Colossians (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). Instead of

giving all the emphasis to a rigorous standard to be applied indiscriminately, each child's temperament is to be closely considered and the teaching is to be done so as to achieve the greatest possible adaptation to the child's need.

(3) Strangely, the words, "when he is old," are usually interpreted these days to mean, "when he is grown"—has reached adulthood—but this the passage neither says nor teaches. The affirmation of Solomon deals with the fruits of training in old age; and, the meaning is, that an individual who has been trained properly in the principles of truth and has lived in harmony therewith until he reaches old age will not then abandon that which has become second nature to him. Seldom indeed do people who have followed the course of rectitude and devotion to God abandon this life-long mode of living in their declining years. The [S]criptures do not teach the impossibility of apostasy; Were it taught here that a child, having been properly taught, *cannot fail* to be faithful in adulthood, it would be in conflict with many, many passages asserting that anyone can fail of the grace of God and be lost (1 Chron. 28:9; Rom. 11:22; Gal. 5:4.)

I offer no defence of parents who are so involved in the world and its ways that they neglect the basic preparation of their children for life, and thus contribute to their spiritual delinquency; but neither do I condemn those dedicated and godly parents who did try to turn their children into paths of righteousness, only to fail, through no fault of their own. Samuel and Eli both had ungodly children; God condemned Eli for this, but no word of blame is found in the scriptures touching this matter regarding Samuel. Why? Samuel attempted to restrain his sons without success; there is no evidence that Eli made any effort to turn

his ungodly sons from their evil ways. I have not found a finer statement than the following observations penned by an English writer named Clarkson many years ago regarding the principles involved in Proverbs 22:6, and I adopt it as teaching the truth on this matter:

Not the very best training of the very wisest parents in the world can positively secure goodness and wisdom in their children. For when they have done everything in their power, there must remain that element of individuality which will choose its own course and form its own character. Our children may choose to reject the truth we teach them, and to slight the example we set them, and to despise the counsel we give them. In the will of every child there is a power which cannot be forced, which can only be won. Therefore: 1. Let all parents seek, beside training their children in good habits to win their hearts to that Divine Wisdom in whose friendship and service alone will they be safe. Where sagacity may fail, affection will triumph. Command and persuasion are the two weapons which parental wisdom will do its best to wield. 2. Let all children understand that for their character and their destiny they must themselves be responsible. All the very worthiest and wisest influences of home will lead to no good result if they oppose to them a rebellious spirit, if they do not receive them in the spirit of docility. There is but one gate of entrance into life, and that is the personal, individual acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of the spirit. The parent may lead his child up to it, but the child must pass through it of its own accord.

There is bitter irony in the fact that he who penned these words (Solomon, son of the dedicated David, the "friend of God"), forsook the counsel of his father (1 Chron.

28:9; 2 Chron. 7:17), and “turned away his heart after other gods,” in flagrant, open disobedience to the expressed will of God (1 Kings 11:1-13). And, it is remarkable that the sacred historian particularly observed that it was “when Solomon was old,” that this occurred (1 Kings 11:4). He had not properly *received* and adapted the instruction of his illustrious father.³

As stated earlier, surely the preceding quotes will help us understand better and appreciate more the following Scriptures:

The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him (Prov. 20:7).

Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right (Prov. 20:11).

The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him (Prov. 23:24).

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches (Prov. 24:3-4).

From the preceding verses, among other things, we learn that parents and children have a responsibility to act in certain ways. **Honesty** is an indispensable commodity that parents must exemplify before their children. Parents must be true to their word—they must be people of **integrity**. They must be **impartial** and **objective (just)** in dealing with their children. Thus, children will be taught and trained regarding what honesty is, the importance of telling the truth, and being true to one’s word as well as being just in their dealings with others. However, if parents do their part, but children do not discharge their responsibilities, things will not function or turn out, as

God would have them. Also, the converse of the preceding statement is true. **A wise child heeds instruction.**

While there are some differences between Hall and Woods' previously quoted explanations regarding the meaning of Proverbs 22:6, their detailed comments go far in helping us see what is and what is not involved in the responsibility of parents and children regarding child-rearing as God would have it. Moreover, some errors pertaining to the meaning of Proverbs 22:6 are dispelled by their comments. **Especially is this the case regarding the error that, if a child turns out badly, it is always the fault of the parents.** I never believed that false view before I was married and now that my wife and I have been married for 32 years, have reared four children, and have nine grandchildren (at this writing), I continue not to believe it. But such errors continue to be perpetuated by some today through an imperfect exegesis of the passage and who knows for what other reasons.

Ephesians 6:1-4

Ephesians 6:1-4 is located in the midst of Paul's teaching on different themes dealing with one's faithfulness to God. Just before Ephesians 6:1-4, Paul writes about the relationship of Christ and the church and parallels it to the husband/wife relationship. Coming after these verses is Paul's directive to slaves and masters relative to their duty in their relationship with one another.

As Paul had written to Christian wives, husbands, slaves, and masters directly, he specifically addressed children. We may conclude that these children were Christians because they, too, were a part of "the saints which are at Ephesus, and...the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1). In Ephesus these were they to whom the letter is addressed.

Paul uses the Greek word *tekna*, which is rendered "children."⁴ It is generally used of little children. Possibly this is the reason Paul used it here. Thus, these children

are young enough to be under their parents' jurisdiction but old enough to be Christians. Paul teaches that children have an obligation before God to obey their parents. He says that such obedience is the "right thing" for them to do. In view of the fact they are "in the Lord," they, therefore, are obligated before God to obey their parents.

Let us focus on why they should be obedient to their parents. As noted, Paul declares, "for this is right." In reality, this is the true reason for anything Christians do. People may do the right thing for the wrong reason, or the wrong thing for the right reason. In either case, whether the motive is right and the act wrong or the converse is the case, the obedience is incomplete and, thus, wrong. It is, therefore, important that this motive (doing something because God said so, thus making the thing right) be incorporated as early as possible in a child's life. Of course, it is God who determines what is right—"yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

In the text, *timao* is the Greek word rendered "honour." Its fundamental meaning pertains to valuing and thus pricing accordingly.⁵ How is it possible to properly and accurately value the teaching, discipline, training, care, concern, love, and example of godly parents? What price godly parents! Eternity alone will reveal the good done by such parents. However, children can be wise enough to understand to a degree the blessing they have enjoyed from godly parents. They can do all within their power to show their appreciation to their parents in attitude, deeds, and words of veneration and high esteem. And as one is faithful as he/she travels down the road of life and experiences all that is involved therein, he/she will more and more appreciate godly parents.

The command to honor one's parents is called by Paul "the first commandment with promise." Indeed, God has promised to bless all who keep His commandments (Rev. 22:14). However, there is a special blessing derived from

honoring one's parents. It is "that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth." As a general rule and in the context of the passage, the child who learns to obey and honor his parents will develop the wholesome character traits that, under normal circumstances, promote long life, and certainly quality of life. Again let it be emphasized that such instruction presupposes the parents themselves are teaching and training the children in accordance with God's Word.

Paul reminded Timothy "that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures" (2 Tim. 3:15). Proper respect due anyone or anything is begun in the home. That being the case, among other things, if children do not obey their parents, they will very seldom obey anyone else, including God. Their concept of what is right and wrong will tend to be governed by the whim of the moment, their passions, materialism, and selfishness. All else becomes subsidiary to their desires. Thus, the spoiled brat arrogantly, without shame, parades him/herself before everyone, and a "woe" is pronounced on the person who gets in his/her way.

To the Colossians, Paul penned, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Col. 3:20). In this Scripture, as well as in Ephesians 6:1-4, Paul is not directing children to obey their parents if sin is involved in the children's compliance with their parents' will. This verse also emphasizes the importance of parents being very cautious regarding what they direct their children to do or not do.

It is the responsibility of the husband to superintend his house with love and concern for all those under his headship (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Pet. 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:5; 1 Tim. 3:10). The loving husband is not to make unreasonable demands on the rest of the family. He is to follow the example of his Heavenly Father in showing grace and mercy in his exercise of authority and discipline.

A Great Father Is A Godly Father

Is it not interesting that the first person of the Godhead reveals Himself as God the Father? In Him all authority inheres. Furthermore, He has a family, the church of His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 3:15; Rom. 16:16). Thus, He is our Heavenly Father, and we His spiritual children—brothers and sisters in Christ. Assuredly, God desires for His children the best of all things—going to heaven where we can have the closest and most intimate of relationships with Him is truly “the best of things,” of which there is no better. Thus, we can learn much about the human father’s disposition, character, and conduct from our Heavenly Father.

In the Divine scheme of things, God has seen fit to make man (the husband and father) the head of his wife and family—the home (Eph. 5:23). This is right because every organization has someone who makes the final decision or has the final “say-so” in the governance thereof. As is true of any organization, this is the way that peace, harmony, stability, and order are maintained in the home. Therefore, from their infancy boys must be nurtured, taught, and trained in the fine art and great work of superintending the home. The same is true regarding girls preparing for the role God has for them in this life. Any tampering with God’s order of things must not be tolerated.

Inherent in the work of heading the home is the importance of the parents’ example or pattern of life. They are to be godly, moral, and honest in all things. They are to seek first God’s kingdom and the doing of His will (Matt. 6:33; Psm. 119:172). They must be people of integrity in all things (Luke 8:15).

A sad thing it is when a father or a mother takes little or no interest in the affairs of the home. Godly parents will teach their children to respect authority in general and Bible authority in particular. They will love, train, and provide for their family. On the other hand, parents

who fail to teach and train their children are guilty of a lack of love for their children. They are indifferent, too busy with other matters, and unwilling to pay the price to be godly parents as God defines them to be in His Word. God will not only demand an accounting of us for the use of our time, our money, and our talents, but we will also give an account to Him for what we did or did not do with our children.

Discipline In The Home

It is important to understand that the ideal in the book of Proverbs is magnified and advocated by the condemnation of its opposite—wisdom in opposition to foolishness. In the book of Proverbs, the fundamental difference between the wise child and the foolish one is the child's response to the instruction of its parents. Please notice these fundamental distinctions between the wise and foolish child in the following chart.⁶

Characteristics Of Wise And Foolish Children

Wise Child (Righteous)

obedient
(Prov. 23:22)

accepts discipline, reproof
(Prov. 13:1; 15:5)

discerning
(Prov. 28:7)

brings joy
(Prov. 23:24-25; 29:3a)

righteous, pure behavior
(Prov. 8:20)

Foolish Child (Sinful)

disobedient
(Prov. 15:5)

despises parental reproof
(Prov. 13:1; 13:5)

right in his own eyes
(Prov. 12:15)

causes grief and distress
(Prov. 10:1; 17:21; 17: 25)

shameful, disgraceful behavior
(Prov. 19:26; 28:7)

The Importance Of Discipline In Rearing A Wise Child

It cannot be overly emphasized that love and the ultimate good of the child are the fundamental reasons for parental discipline (Isa. 66:13; Prov. 3:12). Thus, Scriptural discipline is an act of love. Again, the perfect pattern from which we learn how to discipline is our Heavenly Father. One does not love his/her child if the parent fails to discipline him: “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13:24).

Children must be taught, trained, and fully disciplined, beginning while they are young and malleable. Thus, there is a brief period in the child’s life that such may be begun. When should parents begin to do these things with their children? In answer to this question, one preacher stated, “When the child is old enough to get your attention, it is old enough for you to get its attention.” In other words teaching, training, and discipline begin at the child’s birth. That sentiment is echoed by the inspired writer when he penned, “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:18).

We want to emphasize that, in the book of Proverbs, instruction and training are synonymous with discipline. The wise child will learn from the discipline of his parents and, thus, he will respect and be exercised by God’s discipline to become more godly. The self-will that is the source of the obstinacy of the child is to be broken. And it is done in part by correction—yes, corporal punishment—civil government, educators, and the like notwithstanding. It should be noted that in Proverbs 19:19 unbridled anger of parents is condemned because it is a basis for revenge. Wise and loving training regulates the measure and limits of correction itself. Hence, the discipline of the child begins with the godly example of the parents, teaching, then oral

reproof, and finally physical punishment. This is the manner in which God the Father has always dealt with man. Listen to the words of wisdom: “My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Prov. 3:11-12). Thus, the wise child is the one who receives discipline and learns to do right thereby.

Peggi Klubnik wrote:

Three factors must be considered in regard to discipline. First, the rod is a symbol of authority; second, rebellion and disobedience are the object of physical correction; and third, the goal is the correction of wrongdoing. In the Book of Proverbs, the rod, *shebet*, is the symbol of discipline. However, the same word in Psalm 23:4, “Your rod and staff comfort me,” speaks metaphorically of God’s protection. Literally, the *shebet* is a scion, a shoot, or a branch, revealing that physical punishment is involved in discipline.⁷

Hence, we read, “The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly” (Prov. 20:30). The rod is reserved for the foolish child:

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him (Prov. 22:15).

Withold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell (Prov. 23:13-14).

In the book of Proverbs we see, then, that there are three categories of child training:

1. To **the naive child**, there is instruction (early in the child’s life, this would be oral).

2. **The child who scoffs** receives verbal reproof.

3. Physical discipline is reserved for **the foolish child**.⁸ It behooves parents to note the given mindset of their children as they determine the kind of discipline the child needs.

The Lack Of Discipline

There are some parents who will not discipline their children. They do not instruct them orally; they do not give them oral reproof or any kind of physical discipline. Indulgence of children by their parents indicates a lack of love on the part of parents for their children:

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul (Prov. 29:15; Prov. 29:17).

Please consider the following chart concerning styles of parenting.⁹

Styles Of Parenting

	Love	Discipline
NEGLIGENT (Prov. 29:17)	Lack of Attention or expressions of love	Failure to reprove rebuke or discipline
INDULGENT (Prov. 13:24)	Excessive Attention or permissiveness	Failure to reprove, rebuke or discipline
AUTOCRATIC (Prov. 12:18)	Lack of Attention or expressions of Love	Abusive reproof, rebuke or discipline
BIBLICAL (Prov. 3:11-12)	Expressions of Love in best interest of child	Consistent, fair, age/behavior appropriate

In the case of child-rearing, many times Satan opposes Biblically authorized corporal punishment by attacking the abuses thereof (as indicated earlier), as if the abuses themselves are what is being taught, advocated, and upheld by faithful children of God. Of course, nothing of the kind could be further from the truth pertaining to what faithful children of God believe and practice than this mendacious falsehood. For example, some time ago a security camera caught a mother in Indiana punching and shaking her daughter after putting the child in their car. Nowhere in the Bible is a parent or anyone else authorized to treat children as in the case just cited.

On the other hand, some time back on a Saturday morning, having left a Walgreen's store, I was walking across the parking lot to my car. As I walked along some movement caught my eye. What I saw when I turned toward the movement was a woman about twenty-five yards from me trying to get a boy about ten years old into a car parked in front of the same Walgreen's store I had moments before exited. In fact, the woman, boy, and another child had left the store just after I did. The boy with whom the woman was having an altercation was almost as tall as the woman, and the woman was hardly able to control the child. The other child, appearing to have caused no problems, had taken its seat, and was watching the ensuing struggle between the woman (whom I supposed to be the child's mother) and the boy.

Having opened the back door to their car, the woman sought to make the boy sit down in the back seat. He resisted. As the woman faced the child and he faced her, she placed her right hand on his right upper arm and her left on his left upper arm. Having taken hold of his arms, she attempted to force him to sit down in the seat. As she struggled with the boy, he reacted by promptly filling each of his fists on either side of the woman's head with a liberal

amount of her hair and pulled it with all his might. Though she said nothing that I could hear, the woman gave in to his constant and stubborn pull of her hair. After some squirming and shuffling, the woman freed her hair from the boy's grasp. Then, the boy grudgingly ceased his struggles and sat down pouting in the back seat of the car. The woman never raised her voice to him or her hand to strike him that I could see. After she shut the back door of the car, while showing little emotion, she entered the car, started it, and drove away at a normal speed.

As I entered my car, I was thinking that I had just witnessed a case of parent abuse or maybe adult abuse. I certainly do not pretend to know what started the trouble between the woman and the boy. The episode did not appear to be a kidnapping with the child resisting its kidnapper. Moreover, if the child was not an idiot or suffering from some other mental and/or emotional disorder for which he was not responsible, I concluded that the child needed what he had never had—an old-fashioned “whuppin.” I cannot imagine ever thinking that I could conduct myself as that boy did with either of my parents. Indeed, none of our four children ever acted the way that child did with either my wife or me. And to this day, none of our grandchildren is allowed anything like that kind of conduct when they are under our jurisdiction, our children and in-laws notwithstanding.

Now, it may be, in this day of political correctness with “Big Brother” watching, that the woman was afraid to strike the boy in public for fear of being arrested. However, all other things being equal, if the child had been properly disciplined, as he should have been since birth, he would not at his age acted as he did. Nevertheless, to one extent or the other, the preceding episode is witnessed daily throughout our country.

If there is any hope for the American home and, therefore, the nation, we must turn back to the Bible and

restore the truth concerning marriage and the home. The question that should be foremost in the minds of parents is the one Manoah, the father of Samson, asked: "How shall we order the child and how shall we do unto him?" (Judg. 13:12). Manoah and his wife serve as positive examples for all of us in being correctly concerned about the Scriptural way in rearing Samson. Though later Samson chose to live contrary to his "upbringing," Manoah and his wife had correctly done their part in ordering Samson's life while he was under their jurisdiction (Judg. 13:24-25). The following poem by Clifton Rogers expresses the concern of all of the "Manoahs" (mothers and daddies) in the world:

I may never be as clever as my neighbor down
the street;
I may never be as wealthy as some other men I
meet;
I may never have the glory that some other men
have had;
But I've got to be successful as a little fellow's
Dad.
There are certain dreams I cherish that I'd like
to see come true;
There are things I would accomplish ere my
working time is through;
But the task my heart is set on is to guide a
little lad,
And to make myself successful as a little fellow's
Dad.
It's the one job I dream of; it's the task I think of
most;
If I'd fail that growing youngster, I'd have
nothing else to boast;
For though wealth and fame I'd gather, all my
future would be sad,
If I failed to be successful as that little fellow's
Dad.¹⁰

Endnotes

1 P. D. Wilmeth, as quoted in **The Christian Home** (Dallas: 1955), p. 192.

2 Dr. Gary Hall, http://www.lccs.edu/~ghall/resources/prov_22-6/htm

3 Guy N. Woods, **Questions and Answers Open Forum**, Freed-Hardeman College Lectures (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), pp. 191-193.

4 W. E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words** (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell), p. 187.

5 Ibid, pp. 230-231.

6 Peggi Klubnik, **Biblical Principles Of Child Rearing: A Study From The Book Of Proverbs**, <http://www.biblicalresources.org/cms/uploads/childrearing.pdf>, p. 3.

7 Ibid, p. 5.

8 Ibid, p. 5.

9 Ibid, p. 6.

10 Wilmeth, p. 80.



About The Author

Native of Arkansas. Married to Joann (Anglin), 4 children, 9 grandchildren. Graduate: North Eastern Oklahoma State (B. A. and M. Ed.); Oklahoma State University. Local preaching in AR, OK, TX. Editor of *Contending For The Faith*, writes for other publications. Directs Spring Bible Institute and SBI Lectureship in Spring, TX.

CHAPTER 10

Proverbs For Youth: “Listen To Your Parents”

Ronnie Hayes

Introduction

I WANT TO THANK *BROTHER CLARKE* for the invitation to be a part of this wonderful lectureship series. I am so grateful for faithful congregations who rise to the occasion to sponsor sound lectureships such as this. It is a true joy to be around elders who stand for the truth and promote the same. It is always a privilege for me to have the opportunity to participate, and I thank you for such.

The subject assigned to me is one that is near and dear to my heart. For over twenty-five years, I have worked diligently with young people. I have three children of my own, and the concerns that they face are mine as well. Sometimes I shudder to think what the future holds for our youth. I hear all of the statistics that the church is losing 80% of its young people, and it scares me beyond belief. Whose fault is it? Brother Dan Jenkins, in an article entitled, “Is The Church Losing ‘Her’ Young Folk?,” wrote:

Parents who shirk or neglect their responsibility in training and teaching their children, and in providing them with desired social activities can hardly blame the church when they go astray. Parents whose children go astray often react in two ways. They either become angry and malign the church or they suddenly become hyperactive

in “youth activities” (often wanting to take over “youth programs” which their own failure has disqualified them for anything of the sort). At any rate, they have shifted the blame to the church when they should be looking in the mirror.¹

The rearing of our children is paramount. We, as parents, cannot give our children the leftover time of our lives and expect them just to turn out perfect. I don't want to come to the end of my life and say, “What if I had...?” As parents, we are only going to get “one shot” in rearing our children. We better not mess up! How tragic it is for parents who realize too late the tremendous responsibility that has been given to them! It is time for parents to quit trying to be their child's best friend and, first and foremost, be their child's parent! Erma Bombeck wrote an article entitled “Would Have's”:

Someone asked me recently if I had my life to live over, would I change anything. My answer was **no**. But then I thought about it and have changed my mind.

If I had my life to live over again:

*I would have waxed the floor less and listened to my family more.

*I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased or sprayed.

*I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained and the sofa faded.

*I would have eaten popcorn in the “good” living room and worried less about dirt when the fireplace was lit.

*I would have taken time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

*I would have burnt the pink candle sculptured like a rose before it melted while being stored.

*I would have sat cross-legged on the lawn and never worried about grass stains.

*I would have cried and laughed less while watching television, and more while watching real life.

*I would have eaten more ice cream and less cottage cheese.

*I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there for a day.

*I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, or wouldn't show soil, or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

*When my child kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later, now, go get washed up for dinner."

There would have been more "I Love You"s...more "I'm sorry"s...more "I'm listening," but mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute of it...look at it and really see it...try it on...live it...exhaust it...and never give that minute back until there was nothing left of it.²

Our children are a gift from God and we never need to forget it:

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Psm. 127:3-5).³

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant (Gen. 33:5).

And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them (Gen. 48:9).

Our children should be appreciated: "Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers" (Prov. 17:6). There is nothing like having the opportunity to brag on our children. Often times it

brings either a smile or a tear. Christ even reminds us, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14). We need to realize what we have is a great blessing, but one that comes with a great responsibility. The question is, “Are we accepting our responsibility?”

There is no doubt that the Bible places a tremendous responsibility on parents, but it also gives children a great responsibility as well:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4).

Parents are to nurture, while children are to obey and honor. Who has the most difficult task? I don't know if that question can be answered. Each has a huge role.

As we look at the book of Proverbs, let's look at the **commands**, **choices**, and **consequences** and see if we can determine the responsibilities of parents and children.

Commands

It is the responsibility of the parents to instruct their children. Solomon wrote, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). This has always been the case. God gave parents to direct us:

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days

may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:1-9).

Solomon also penned:

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man (Prov. 3:1-4; cf. Prov. 6:21-22; Prov. 7:24; Prov. 27:11).

God has left for man His instruction manual, the Bible. It gives us everything that pertains “unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3).

These instructions should be specific. God said to Solomon, “My son, forget not **my law**; but let thine heart keep **my commandments**” (Prov. 3:1, emp. mine, RH). This sounds pretty specific to me. God has not left His children to wander aimlessly without any hope of knowing what to do! The same should be true of parents. We are not to allow our children to go through life without knowing what to do. I hear parents who use the flawed reasoning

that they are not going to force their children go to church because that would turn them against the church. We insist that our children do other things that are good for them. If they are sick and the cure is bad-tasting medicine, we insist that they take the medicine. Why? Because, as the parent, we know what is best. This is why we have to be very specific.

If you love your children, you will help them define and clearly understand modest apparel. Children don't arrive in the world knowing about modesty. A toddler is just as likely to stroll through a room full of company with his diaper off as with it on. They don't understand modesty; therefore, it is our responsibility to teach them: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel" (1 Tim. 2:9). Again, you will have to be very specific.

As parents, you will need to monitor your children's language. Paul told the church at Ephesus, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29). As we mature as Christians, we know there is language that we cannot use. However, many times children are like little parrots that simply mimic anything they hear. With the influence of television, they are likely to hear almost anything, and in turn they are likely to say almost anything. Who remembers the days of having your mouth washed out with soap? Why did your parents do that? They were trying to be specific in what you could say or not say.

Parents cannot afford to allow their children to be friends with just anyone. Paul warned, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). In this day and age, parents better be very careful whom they allow to influence their children. In this day of "tolerance," we don't know who may be extolling the virtues of homosexuality, safe sex, drugs, or alcohol. You don't know who may be teaching your children that disrespect toward

authority is okay. We are going to have to be specific regarding the quality of our children's friends.

These instructions should be spiritual. Our instructions should help our children to understand God. Solomon said:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (Prov. 3:5-12).

Where will our children receive this spiritual instruction if it does not come from us? Do you think the world is going to instruct them in righteousness? If our children are going to learn about worship, it is not going to come from the world: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). It is in the Bible that you will find the items of worship (Col. 3:16; Acts 2:42). If our children want to learn the truth about marriage, they will have to turn to the Bible (Matt. 19:1-9). What are you teaching your children when it comes to spiritual matters? Do you teach them to sleep in on Sunday morning or get them up and teach them the importance of Bible study? Do you teach them to worship on Sunday night and Wednesday night, or do you show them that your opinion reflects that there are other things more important? Do you teach them to seek first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33)? Do they see you studying the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15)?

We must instruct our children concerning spiritual matters because it is our responsibility, and no one else is going to do it.

These instructions should be seized. As parents, once we have instructed properly, then our children must hold onto what they have been taught:

Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life (Prov. 4:10-13).

My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken (Prov. 3:21-26).

Solomon also instructed us to “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov. 23:23). Failing to hold on to the truth is not a new problem. Judah was instructed by God, yet the people refused to hold to what He said:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father’s commandment:

notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me (Jer. 35:13-15).

It is a foolish child that will not hold on to the instructions of his parents:

My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother (Prov. 1:8).

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments (Prov. 3:1).

My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion (Prov. 3:21).

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother (Prov. 6:20).

A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent (Prov. 15:5).

What will you do with the instruction of your parents?

Choices

Once we have received instruction, then we have a choice. Are we going to accept the instructions and be obedient, or are we going to reject the advice offered in the instruction? Solomon pleaded:

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put

away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil (Prov. 4:20-27).

It has always been true with the Word of God that, once we hear the truth, we have to make up our mind how we are going to respond. Joshua encouraged those of his day to “choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Josh. 24:15). Christ stated, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). Moses asked the question, “Who is on the Lord’s side?” (Exod. 32:26). Elijah wanted to know, “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21). It is important for us to see their choices so that we can make informed decisions of our own.

In the book of Proverbs, there is a comparison between the wise son and the foolish son. One difference between the wise and foolish is that the wise son hears the instruction of his parents and obeys them:

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother (Prov. 10:1).

A wise son heareth his father’s instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke (Prov. 13:1).

My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine (Prov. 23:15).

Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice (Prov. 23:22-25).

The foolish son will despise the instruction of the father:

A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent (Prov. 15:5).

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother (Prov. 15:20).

A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him (Prov. 17:25).

A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping (Prov. 19:13).

He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach. Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge (Prov. 19:26-27).

Only you and I can choose whether we are wise or foolish. The choices we make are not only important for here and now—they are eternally important.

We are all faced with choices, but what we do with these will determine whether we will be found faithful. In a choice there is always an offer. In tempting Christ, Satan made an offer:

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Matt. 4:8-9).

We, as well as our children, are faced with offers everyday. Are we going to do the right thing? Not if we fail to examine the offer and to see its consequences.

Know that with each choice there is usually a lure. If there was no expectation of pleasure or advantage, we would not be tempted. Moses recognized this:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:24-25).

Satan is going to make all kinds of promises but, be assured, he will not keep them. He is going to lure us through his own avenues of temptation:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:15-16).

Have you ever wondered why Satan's lure is so great? I believe it has to do with the fact that many cannot see past the "here and now." They want their reward now. Christ warned of those who sought their reward now:

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward (Matt. 6:1-2).

Be aware that every choice has its price. Usually, whatever we do, we have to decide if we are willing to pay that price. Moses saw the truth behind the lure and was not willing to pay the price: "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:26). If we can always keep in mind the truth about the "greater riches," we can then make the appropriate choice as well. But what easily happens is we get sidetracked. Satan is going to be certain that you and I get sidetracked. The lure of his

choices will make the price that has to be paid for them appear as if they are worth it. Be cautious! Just like a fishing lure, it might look attractive and appealing, but it contains a hook!

Consequences

I am so thankful for godly parents who instructed me in the pathway of righteousness. It is their instruction which armed me to deal with the choices that lay ahead. These instructions provided the knowledge needed to deal with the choices. There must be knowledge before application can take place. Once we have the commands and we are faced with the choices, if we understand the consequences, many times it will help us with the choices. The consequences of our actions will either be our reward or punishment, dependent upon what we have done. We live in an age where most of our society does not want to deal with consequences if they are negative. People want to go about doing whatever they desire without having to suffer the consequences. Solomon tells us, “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Prov. 20:11).

Everyone is going to be known for his or her actions. What are you known as? Some boys and girls are known as immoral because they are sexually active before marriage. The Hebrews writer said, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Yet when they become pregnant before marriage, they just want the problem and stigmatism to go away. It just doesn’t happen that way. There is another life to think about, and this life is going to affect the lives of many others. Maybe college is out now for the mom and dad. The dreams are now nightmares. But this is what happens when children don’t recognize the consequences of their choices. No one

is saying, “You don’t have the right to choose,” but we are saying, “If you make the wrong choice, then be ready to deal with the consequences.”

Solomon recognized that the consequences of our actions would come:

A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren (Prov. 17:2).

My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both (Prov. 24:21-22)?

Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer (Prov. 28:24).

The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not (Prov. 30:17-18).

When we are dealing with consequences, we need to realize that these consequences can be inflicted upon us now. When Adam and Eve transgressed God’s law in the Garden of Eden, they were immediately punished (Gen. 3:16-24). Nadab and Abihu suffered the consequences of their actions (Lev. 10:1-2). Over the years, I have performed funerals for both young and old who were suffering the consequences of their actions. I remember one young man who had been out partying all night long and got into his truck and sped off, only to miss a turn, hit a tree, and lose his life. I’d like to think that, if he had known what was going to happen, he would have never gotten behind the wheel of that truck. But oftentimes, young people think they are invincible—they do not recognize or anticipate

the consequences. All too often those consequences remind us that they indeed are not invincible!

The consequences of our actions can also be more severe than we ever thought. In a warped sense, some young people may, after thinking a situation through, think that, if the worst-case scenario happens, they are ready for it. But they are not. Sin carries you further than you want to go. It keeps you longer than you want to stay, and it costs you more than you are willing to pay. Are you willing to pay with your life? Some have. Are you willing to remain in an unconscious state? Some will. Are you willing to have to sacrifice your dreams, hopes and future? Some do. The consequences of our actions can be severe.

Our consequences can also be eternal. Sin separates us from God: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). Paul told the church at Rome, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). If we die separated from God, there we shall remain. Are you willing to spend an eternity in a devil’s hell for some frivolous moment here on earth?

How important is it for children to heed their parents’ instruction? It could be the difference between heaven and hell. There is no doubt that, as parents, we have been blessed with some of the most precious gifts. May we never take them for granted and may we ever prepare them for eternity. As children, may you ever treasure the wisdom of your parents as they direct you toward God.

Here are 20 suggestions on “Raising Your Kids For Christ” by Gary Workman.

1. Teach them that “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

2. Clearly demonstrate to them at all times that God is the most important thing in your life by never allowing other things to interfere with the worship and work of the Lord (Matt. 6:33).

3. Let their earliest memories include daily readings of Bible stories and frequent discussions of God’s Word in the family circle (2 Tim. 3:15).

4. Give them their own Bible even before they can read. Read to them from it at home and have them take it to church (Deut. 6:6-7). In their pre-school years, have them begin a lifetime habit of regular memorization and review of important Bible verses (Psm. 119:11; Psm. 119:16).

5. Teach them to pray by having them repeat after you phrase by phrase as soon as they are able. Continue their development by praying audibly with them daily (Eph. 6:18). (Never teach them a memorized prayer.)

6. Have “devotional” times and speak often of the joys of serving God (Phil. 4:4). Sing songs together about it (never with an instrument—Col. 3:16), and instill in them a longing to go to heaven.

7. Spend the necessary time to be the main spiritual teacher of your children, moreso than the preacher or Bible class teacher, etc. (Eph 6:4), and you will produce young people who will not blindly follow some unstable teacher or youth group but who will, instead, be leaders in helping mold other young people for Christ.

8. Teach them that lying is one of the worst things they could ever do (Rev. 21:8; Rev.

21:27), and punish them firmly (at the seat of the problem) when you discover they've done it (Prov. 29:15-17). This will help keep their lives an open book before you and save you possible heartache in their teenage years.

9. Train them early in principles of modesty and you won't have to combat shorts, halter-tops and scanty swimsuits in years to come (1 Tim. 2:9).

10. Keep their speech pure by not allowing yourself or them to ever use profanity or even a substitute such as: golly, gee, gosh, darn, heck, etc. (Matt. 12:36-37).

11. Help keep their minds pure by monitoring their reading and viewing materials and personal friendships closely in their early years (1 Cor. 15:33). Caution them often about the trash Satan peddles, and you will develop them into conscientious young people who will do much of their own censoring and who will understand that even "PG" movies are usually unfit for Christian consumption (1 Pet. 2:11).

12. Be responsible enough to bring up the subject of sex and morality. (Don't wait for them to ask or expect them to get their information elsewhere.) Start early. Be open, straightforward, and repetitious (Eph. 5:3-5). Then the time will never come when either you or they will be embarrassed to discuss any aspect of it. And your guidance will give them a solid foundation to weather any temptations of teenage years (2 Tim. 2:22).

13. Instill in your children a strong desire to save themselves for the one who will someday be their mate (Rom. 13:13-14) and to consider him (or her) the greatest thief who ever lived who would steal from them

their virtue. Encourage them to always be cautious in extending romantic favors. Expose the danger of “making out” by telling them how one step leads to another.

14. Reinforce your moral teaching (Gen. 18:19) by setting specific guidelines for dating such as: “No going to dances or other unwholesome activities; No sitting as a couple in a parked car or unattended house; Be home by curfew time,” etc. Never assume that your minor son or daughter is old enough, wise enough to need your supervision no longer (1 Cor. 10:12).

15. Train your children to date only those who are morally upright, and urge them strongly to plan on marrying only a Christian (Matt. 6:33; 2 Cor. 6:16).

16. Raise your children to have respect for and to cherish warm relationships with older people (1 Pet. 5:5). Keep them from forming youth cliques when they are young, and most likely they will never be factious, divisive, or cliquish when they are older.

17. Teach your children the virtue of work by giving them regular jobs and responsibilities around the home, and you will rear them to be productive adults who will go through life on their own initiative, paying their own way (1 Thess. 4:11-12; 2 Thess. 3:10). And teach them by example to be generous (2 Cor. 9:7).

18. Train those of your children who are members of the body of Christ never to get too busy with secular pursuits to do something for the Lord’s cause. Provide opportunities for them to spend time weekly in advancing the work of the church (John 9:4). If you run out of ideas, ask some involved person for suggestions.

19. Encourage them often to plan the future of their lives to include a “career” for Christ

as, for example, a Bible class teacher, religious writer, song director or composer, preacher, deacon, elder...or a combination of these. But in any case, urge them to be personal proclaimers of the Gospel (Acts 8:4), and encourage them to start with their friends when they are young.

20. Build a family life in such a way that "home" is a happy place which means more to your children than any other place they could go (except church), and you will provide a lifetime of fond memories here and a longing for the great reunion in heaven (1 Thess. 4:13-17).⁴

Endnotes

1 Dan Jenkins, "Is the Church Losing 'Her' Young Folk?," **The Bulletin** (Hickory Ridge Church of Christ, January 1981).

2 Erma Bombeck, "Would Have's," **The Newsletter** (Covington Church of Christ, November 1981).

3 All Scriptures, unless otherwise cited, will be taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

4 Gary Workman, "Raising Your Kids for Christ," **The Peninsula Proclaimer** (Church of Christ in Newport News, Virginia, August 1981).



About The Author

Native of Alabama. Married to Cynthia (Reeves), 3 children, 1 grandchild. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching; Alabama Christian School of Religion (B. A.); Freed-Hardeman University (M. A.). Local preaching; AR, AL. Conducts several Gospel meetings and Lectureships each year. Local preacher, Adamsville, AL.

CHAPTER 11

Proverbs For Youth: “Watch Your Companions”

Cliff Goodwin

Introduction

W*ISDOM IS TIMELESS.* The attitudes and insights that built relationships in the long ago will cultivate beneficial and lasting relationships still today. The thoughtful actions that “greased the wheels” of everyday living then will still make life a lot easier now. The sage warnings that cautioned the young and inexperienced in ancient times still prove vitally helpful in this modern day. This is because human nature essentially has not changed from the Edenic expulsion until now. People have always been people, and people still act like people. Humanity is still prone to the same weaknesses, tendencies, and shortcomings as always. We still need the same guidance and instruction as always. In short, we need spiritual wisdom relative to living life upon this earth—both before our fellow man and before our God.

God is the Provider of such wisdom. Paul praised God with his pen, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33).¹ Elsewhere, he wrote, “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). God is an Omniscient Being—that is, He knows all things. There are no bounds

to His knowledge and wisdom. But the Scriptures also teach that God makes wisdom available to man. James wrote concerning the wisdom from above (Jas. 3:17), obviously implying that such wisdom comes from God, for every good and perfect gift is from God and comes down from above (Jas. 1:17). Earlier in his epistle, James had penned these words, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (Jas. 1:5). Hence, the origin of all true, spiritual wisdom is God.

God is timeless. He is eternal, having no beginning and no ending. The psalmist touched upon this principle when he wrote, “even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psm. 90:2). Both the timelessness and changelessness of Christ are stressed in Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” God spoke through Malachi, “For I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). God is not limited by time, nor does He change through its passage. The past, present, and future are all before the Lord in His omniscience and omnipotence. He is the Eternal Constant—all-knowing and all-powerful. Thus, being timeless in the truest sense of the word, God imparts wisdom that is similarly timeless.

The foregoing thoughts are important as one begins a study of the Proverbs. Proverbs is a book of timeless wisdom given by a timeless God; for this reason, Proverbs, with all the other books of the Bible, is itself a timeless book. The wisdom imparted to youth by the inspired Solomon some 3000 years ago still has a message of vital importance to young people today. The counsel, guidance, and instruction that steered youth into paths of godliness and out of harm’s way in ancient Israel can provide a spiritual foundation even for youth in modern America.

Much is written in the book of Proverbs about companionships. Solomon repeatedly cautions his pupil

to steer clear of evil acquaintances and associations, warning of the pitfalls and perils that come from evil companionships. If such instruction were needed in the world of Solomon's day, then such is certainly imperative today—both for young and old alike. To a large extent, we define ourselves by the friends with whom we surround ourselves. Good friends serve to help make us better people, but evil companions degrade both our standards and our character. Based on the book of Proverbs, let us note four major considerations pertaining to our companionships.

Counsel Regarding Our Companionships

The word “counsel” is often used in the sense of wisdom offered in the form of advice or instruction. The author of Proverbs repeatedly gives counsel regarding the selection of friends or companions. Of course, one has the ability either to accept or to reject the wisdom that is offered. One who fears the Lord will seek knowledge and wisdom (Prov. 1:7) and will be ready to accept sound counsel.

Solomon described the benefits that come with the attainment of wisdom. First, wisdom directs one down the paths of goodness, righteousness, and truth: “That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous” (Prov. 2:20). God's Word counsels us to choose the good, both in our **conduct** and in our **companions**. This is because “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18). Even as the sun's first rays at dawn increase constantly throughout the morning, reaching the pinnacle of their glory at midday, so it is with the righteous. As they continue in righteousness and truth, they will grow in knowledge, holiness, and joy²—a progression culminating ultimately with a home in heaven (cf. Phil. 3:13-14; Col. 3:1-4).

Second, wisdom provides not only guidance into the good, but, when attained and employed, it also provides protection from the evil: “When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee” (Prov. 2:10-11). It guides us in making the right decisions and thereby shields us from many problems and mistakes that would otherwise come. Solomon stresses this protective quality of wisdom when he writes, “To deliver thee from the way of the evil” (Prov. 2:12), and, “To deliver thee from the strange woman” (Prov. 2:16). Wisdom teaches one to stay away from evil cohorts—both male and female. Discretion and understanding are facets of wisdom involved in this protective process. Discretion is the testing of that which is uncertain so as to avoid danger; it involves reflection and careful consideration.³ Understanding is the power of distinguishing and separating, being able to decide on the best.⁴ Both of these abilities are essential aspects of wisdom.

Time and time again, the Proverbs warn their readers to avoid association and companionship with evil people. Though sinners entice—that is, they can be very persuasive—we are warned not to consent unto their evil ways (Prov. 1:10). The surest way to avoid becoming an accomplice in evil activity is to set one’s mind firmly before the temptation comes. The sober-mindedness enjoined by Peter should include forethought regarding evil companions and compromising, or enticing, situations; the vigilance commanded by the same should be aware of temptation and ready to answer it with a firm “no” (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). As one author noted, “The only answer to all enticements of evil is a decided negative.”⁵ Encountering temptation and resisting it is a spiritual battle, and, as with all battles, preparation beforehand is critical. The decision must already be made before the temptation comes.

Solomon further wrote, “My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path” (Prov. 1:15), and, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Prov. 4:14-15). The counsel of Proverbs is clear: stay away from evil people and their evil ways. The former passage admonishes us not to walk in the way **with** them. This is the point at which so many problems begin. If one walks with evil people—that is, he associates with them—it is but a matter of time until he is corrupted himself: “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33, ASV).⁶ Solomon’s words from Proverbs 4 are more emphatic, being comprised of a fourfold warning: avoid, do not pass by, turn from, and pass along. One is to put the greatest possible distance between himself and the way of evil people.⁷ We should seek to avoid not only the **manner** of the evil life, but also its **direction**. It has been said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Indeed, this is true both literally and spiritually. If one never **begins** down the pathway of evil men, then one will never reach its wretched end.

Perhaps wisdom’s counsel regarding our companionships is best summarized in Proverbs 4:20-27. These verses begin with the father (or mentor) urging his learner to heed his guidance and to store it up in the heart, stating that his counsel is healthy and life-giving. The author then reveals five keys to avoiding evil companionships and the evil influences coming from them.

1. **Safeguard** your heart (Prov. 4:23).
2. **Sanctify** your speech (Prov. 4:24).
3. **Straighten** your gaze (Prov. 4:25).
4. **Study** your paths (Prov. 4:26).
5. Be **steadfast** in your resolve (Prov. 4:27).

Safeguard your heart. All spiritual concerns begin in the heart, or mind, of man. We must carefully monitor

and control our thoughts, attitudes, and deliberations, for such will eventually result in our outward actions. Jesus taught that grievous sins actually emanate from the heart (Mark 7:20-23), and that only the pure in heart would see God (Matt. 5:8). So it is in our companionships. We must meditate on God's Word, allowing its teachings to mold and shape our attitudes toward sin and sinners. God's Word in our hearts will curb the desire to be **with** evil men or to be **like** them.

Sanctify your speech. Mirroring our hearts will be our speech. The wise man specifically warned against dishonesty in our verbal communication: "Put away from you a fraudulent mouth, and distance yourself from deceitful lips" (Prov. 4:24, FHV).⁸ Much is known about a person by his or her speech, for Jesus taught, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). One who lies is a sinner (cf. Rev. 21:8) and is known to be a sinner, both in the eyes of men and of God. Sinners are often drawn to other sinners, where they feel an immediate affinity with each other. Hence, it is actually possible to draw evil people to you by lying words and dishonest dealings. Sinners perhaps will feel more comfortable in your company, realizing that truth and righteousness mean so little to you. On the other hand, words of truth and soberness (cf. Acts 26:25) have a tendency to keep hardened sinners at a distance, which is precisely the aim of our everyday companionships.

Straighten your gaze. In order for life to be lived successfully, it must be lived purposefully. The wise man instructs us to look straight ahead, indicating purpose, focus, and direction. It is immeasurably easier to avoid evil companionships when one is fixed on achieving the goal at hand. Sinners are hardly able to pull that soul off the strait and narrow whose eyes are focused on Christ and on heaven (cf. Heb. 12:2; Phil. 3:14). We must always

remember the whole of human existence—that is, to fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13-14), and we must stay focused on the reward that awaits the faithful.

Study your paths. One who is serious about reaching the goal will also be careful in his everyday decisions. This is in keeping with the words of Paul: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Eph. 5:15). Wisdom dictates that one carefully study, or contemplate, the decisions he is about to make. Haste and carelessness bring many problems in many facets of life, including the choice of friends. Instead of choosing friends haphazardly, we should carefully consider the associations we need to maintain. The American Standard footnote supplies, “Weigh carefully [the path of thy feet]” (Prov. 4:26). Each choice brings with it certain consequences; one should always weigh carefully the consequences before settling on a choice!

Be steadfast in your resolve. All of the foregoing can be found null and void without the steadfast resolve to “stick” with what is right. Living right before God is the most difficult life one can live, yet it is also the most rewarding! Along the way there will certainly be many enticements, stumbling blocks, pitfalls, discouragements, etc. Evil men will seek to draw us away after them, but we must not waver, detouring from God’s will to the left or right. Instead, we must always continue pressing onward, not pausing to compromise with evil, but being “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Characteristics Of Evil Companions

It has been said that one of the best ways to avoid danger is to recognize it as it approaches. This is certainly helpful pertaining to evil companions. People bearing certain characteristics should be shunned as possible

companions, realizing that bad influences really do “rub off” on others. In the opening chapter of Proverbs, Solomon provides at least four salient characteristics of evil companions (Prov. 1:11-14; Prov. 1:16-19):

1. **Malicious** intent (Prov. 1:11-12; Prov. 1:16; Prov. 1:19)
2. **Materialistic** aspirations (Prov. 1:13; Prov. 1:19)
3. A **miserable mob** (Prov. 1:14)
4. **Meaningless**, or futile, efforts (Prov. 1:17-18).

Malicious intent: Anyone who is cruel and ruthless, contriving malicious and hurtful machinations, is not a suitable friend. There are those whose hearts are so hardened and calloused by sin that a second thought never crosses their minds when they decide to do violence unto another. Even further, many grow restless when unable to victimize and plunder; they cannot wait for the next opportunity to hurt and exploit. They seem to get drunk on inflicting harm to others. As Solomon elsewhere penned:

For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence (Prov. 4:16-17).

There are those who live by the philosophy, “What’s yours is mine, and I’ll take it if I want it!” They think nothing about hurting the innocent or helpless; in fact, it is often the helpless upon whom they prey. Viciousness and violence typify these individuals, and many such persons will wind up either serving prison time, dying an early death, or both! Sadly, though, they will likely drag others down with them—their friends, cohorts, and accomplices.

Materialistic aspirations: Greedy ambition is often that which fuels the flames of the above malice. As Paul wrote, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds

of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10, ASV). Covetousness is an insatiable appetite. The greedy must have more and more, and ultimately they will resort to dastardly acts in order to obtain their booty. Friends who worship gain and become obsessed with the treasures of others should summarily be discarded as friends. They are started down a treacherous and destructive path (1 Tim. 6:5; 1 Tim. 6:9-10), and they would have you follow it with them. A major weakness of the materialistic man is his shortsightedness. He becomes obsessed with those things that he will one day leave to another (cf. Eccl. 2:18) and that ultimately will be burned into oblivion (2 Pet. 3:10ff).

A miserable mob: There is the familiar cliché, “Misery loves company.” So it is among many evildoers. Their proposition is, “Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse” (Prov. 1:14). They persuade and entice with the promise of ill-gotten gains, often making promises they cannot fulfill (or, sometimes, never intend to fulfill). They may feel as if there is strength in numbers, “packing up” sometimes like wolves, but God’s side is always the majority (cf. Exod. 23:2; Prov. 11:21). Deceived and deluded themselves, they seek to recruit others into their villainous mob.

Meaningless, or futile, efforts: No one is as vain as he who cannot see his vanity. Many sinners consider themselves happy—contented to walk the paths of darkness. All the while, they are oblivious to their own demise. They plot and scheme against the innocent, not realizing it is their own downfall that they are contriving. Wisdom would teach anyone to shun such people. The wicked are self-destructive, and they will lead others with them to destruction as well. God will not be mocked; the evil shall reap what they sow (Gal. 6:7-8). The words of Hosea describe aptly the meaningless efforts of the

ungodly: “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” (Hos. 8:7).

In Proverbs 2:12-19, Solomon provides more characteristics of those in whose company we should not customarily place ourselves. One could divide these characteristics into two sets, separated along the lines of gender. However, let it be noted that “**Man** is here [in Proverbs 2:12, CG] used generically, as the representative of the whole class of base and wicked men, since all the following verbs are in the plural.”⁹ Certainly, the following characteristics can be found in both genders, and individuals bearing the same should be avoided as companions, regardless of their sex.

Evil Men

1. **Deception** (Prov. 2:12; Prov. 2:15).
2. **Depart** into darkness (Prov. 2:13).
3. **Delight** in evil (Prov. 2:14).

Immoral Woman

1. **Flatters** with her words (Prov. 2:16).
2. **Forsakes** her husband (Prov. 2:17).
3. **Forgets** God’s covenant (Prov. 2:17).
4. **Fatal** results (Prov. 2:18-19).

Evil Men: Evil people are commonly marked by dishonesty and deception. As the wise man pointed out in this passage, they often “speak in deceit...and their ways [are] deceitful” (Prov. 2:12; Prov. 2:15, FHV). Lying is certainly a practice that can be “picked up” by befriending the wrong persons. Sinners are also those who have left the paths of light in favor of the ways of darkness. Solomon elsewhere indicated their moral plight and depravity with these words: “The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble” (Prov. 4:19). In their sin they are blinded to their own faults and shortcomings and to the stumblingblocks that beset them. Such darkness of soul will be betrayed by their speech, which lacks true wisdom and knowledge (cf. Prov. 14:7, ASV). But perhaps

the most vivid description of evil men is their pleasure, or delight, in evil—not only that which they do themselves, but also that which they behold in others. Paul wrote that those who have pleasure in the wicked are worthy of death (Rom. 1:32).

The Immoral Woman: There are sundry passages throughout the Proverbs pertaining to the strange woman. The New King James Version¹⁰ often renders the term “immoral woman” (cf. Prov. 2:16; Prov. 5:3; Prov. 7:5). She is a woman who is sexually **promiscuous**, instead of sexually **pure**. Such women (and men, for that matter) should certainly be avoided as companions—especially dating companions! There are many licentious people who seek to compromise their dates sexually. Wisdom counsels one to recognize such persons and to avoid them. Such a woman may flatter with her words, or make her words smooth (Prov. 2:16, FHV; cf. Prov. 5:3); in other words, her speech can be very persuading and seductive. There are immoral women who have husbands—men to whom they have become shamelessly unfaithful. Such seems to be the case in the passage at hand.¹¹ The “guide of her youth” is most likely her first and rightful husband. Many an immoral woman has forsaken her husband and become an adulteress; she pulls her cohorts into adultery with her. She is one who has forgotten the covenant of God—both in overall manner of life and perhaps with specific regard to her marriage vows.

There are many women who at one time were living godly lives, only to forsake such paths and to be pulled down into the mire of wantonness. The key trait to remember about such women (or men!) is the deadly consequences that follow them. Broken homes, illegitimate pregnancies, murderous abortions, emotional scars, angered spouses, disease, and even death follow in the wake of the promiscuous!

Consequences Of Choosing Evil Companions

A common shortcoming of youth is shortsightedness. It is so easy to become enamored with immediate concerns or benefits that seem so big in the present, but are actually so small in the big picture. For example, high school popularity seems so important to most youths while they are in school. After graduation, however, when one embarks on life in college or in the working world, whether he/she was popular in high school means virtually nothing! Nonetheless, it is very difficult for teens to foresee and understand this fact while in high school. Thus, in pursuit of popularity, many teens “fall in” with the wrong crowd; they choose evil companions, and these supposed “friends” bring about so much trouble or even ruin.

Many a teenager has attempted to defend an evil companion by simply saying, “But he’s my **friend!**” What one must realize is that a “friend” who wields an evil influence over another is no friend at all! Evil friendships can and will bring you down. As with any wrong choice, there are some serious consequences that come from choosing these supposed “friends.” Note some of these from Proverbs.

F—Fatal results (Prov. 2:18-19; Prov. 21:16).

R—Ruined life (Prov. 25:26).

I—Influenced for the worse (Prov. 13:20).

E—Embarrassment to parents (Prov. 28:7; Prov. 29:3).

N—Neediness (Prov. 23:20-21).

D—Darkness (Prov. 24:20).

Fatal results: Evil companions can lead one down deadly paths in a number of ways. They first bring spiritual death. When one begins associating with sinners, he will soon adopt their sinful ways. Sin is that which separates man from God (Isa. 59:2), and so separated, man is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1). There are so many walking

and talking upon this earth, but, spiritually, they are the walking dead (cf. 1 Tim. 5:6). The immoral woman, for example, is herself dead spiritually, but she also kills those who become her partners (cf. Prov. 2:18-19). Nonetheless, the fatal consequences of having evil companions often do not stop at spiritual death. Due many times to the sinful, immoral, and often unlawful behavior practiced by sinners, they often find themselves in an early grave—literally! Again with the example of the immoral woman, physical death may come from disease or from the hands of an angry husband (cf. Prov. 6:32-35). Then comes the tragedy of all tragedies. Whenever a person dies **physically**, while in a state of death **spiritually**, he is then dead **eternally** (cf. Rev. 21:8). No doubt, unwisely choosing evil companions as “friends” carries some most fatal results. It is no wonder why the wise man wrote, “He who wanders from the path of wisdom heads for the cemetery” (Prov. 21:16, FHV).

Ruined life: For one “on the outside looking in” to witness a young life ruined by evil companions—so-called “friends”—is pathetic indeed. There are so many young lives that have so much potential for righteousness and prosperity, but they are irreparably marred due to the influence of “the wrong crowd.” The wise man wrote, “As a troubled fountain, and a corrupted spring, so is a righteous man that giveth way [“gives in to,” FHV] before the wicked” (Prov. 25:26, ASV). In the ancient world of Palestine, a spring was a wonderful blessing, holding much potential for great good and benefit. For such a spring to become trampled, corrupted, or otherwise made unfit for use was without excuse! It is likewise lamentable to see such bright and promising lives ruined today by evil influences, especially so early in life.

Influenced for the worse: The wonderful thing about a true friend is the fact that such will make one a better person. True friends influence one for the good.

Solomon brought out this point in saying, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Prov. 13:20). By surrounding oneself with spiritually wise people, there is the distinct likelihood that some of that wisdom will “rub off.” On the other hand, one who keeps company with fools will also adopt some of their folly—folly that can lead to destruction. It is a shame for youth to expend both time and effort in trying to form evil companionships, only to have those “friends” influence them for the worse, not the better. Such companions do not draw one any closer to God, and certainly not any closer to heaven.

Embarrassment to parents: Choosing evil companions not only affects the youth so choosing, but it also has repercussions for the parents of that youth. He who chooses ungodly sinners as his “friends” brings shame upon his father (Prov. 28:7). On the other hand, he who loves wisdom (and thereby chooses his friends wisely) brings great joy to his father (Prov. 29:3). It is interesting to note that, in both of the foregoing verses, the evil companions are partakers in fleshly indulgence. The “riotous men” of Proverbs 28:7 are rendered “gluttons” in the American Standard Version, while we read of harlots in Proverbs 29:3. This is often the case still today! Evil companions still attempt to lure others into sins of fleshly indulgence—sins such as fornication, drinking, and even drug abuse. Whenever a son or daughter is seduced into such evil acts, shame, disgrace, and embarrassment are the bitter fruits suffered by parents. The prodigal son serves as a New Testament illustration:

The younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with **riotous living**. . . . But as soon as thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with **harlots** (Luke 15:13; Luke 15:30, emp. mine throughout, CG).

Neediness: “Falling in with the wrong crowd” can also lead to material poverty. The wise man counseled, “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Prov. 23:20-21). The maintenance of many vices is very costly. In our day and time, neither alcohol nor tobacco is cheap. Illicit drugs come at especially high prices. Further, those who engage in drunkenness and intoxication are often unable to work, and thereby unable to make money. One can literally “drink away a fortune” over time in the company of evil companions. When one adopts sinners as his “friends,” he will soon adopt their ways, and, with their ways, he will also inherit their fate.

Darkness: Evil men and women walk in spiritual darkness, and their destiny will be eternal darkness. Those who company with them will come to the same tragic end. The wise man wrote, “For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the lamp of the wicked shall be put out” (Prov. 24:20, ASV). The figure of one’s lamp being put out is used elsewhere in Proverbs (Prov. 13:9; Prov. 20:20), and it is always indicative of a terrible end. It was apparently a custom in the ancient east to keep a lamp burning all night in the home. The housewife would rise during the night to replenish the lamp’s oil, so as to prevent the light from going out (cf. Prov. 31:18). For a lamp to go out during the night was considered a fatal omen.¹² Hence, the figure is here used metaphorically to indicate the complete cessation and end of all happiness and prosperity. There is a day coming in which all happiness and contentment will be taken away from the ungodly. They literally have nothing to look forward to¹³ beyond this life—nothing but darkness:

These are spots in your feasts of charity, when
they feast with you, feeding themselves without

fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, **to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever** (Jude 12-13).

Do the six foregoing consequences make evil companions sound like true friends? Absolutely not! If only all people—both young and old—could see evil companions for what they really are, maybe then they would avoid the devastating consequences that come from choosing such people as “friends.”

Contentment That Comes From Righteousness

Youth whose parents guide them in the way of righteousness and prevent them from forming evil acquaintances sometimes feel as if they are missing something. One must be careful not to fall into the trap of envying the ungodly, their “liberated” lifestyle, or the increase they may enjoy through ill-gotten gain. Sin is **always** wrong—no matter the temporal perks that may attend it—and it most certainly has a payday coming! One who loses sight of these facts in coveting the lifestyle of sinners will soon enough choose that lifestyle for himself. Solomon warned, “Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways” (Prov. 3:31).

Elsewhere one may read of at least two reasons not to desire the company and companionship of evildoers: “Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief” (Prov. 24:1-2). The first of these reasons is because of their **despicable** nature. The ungodly are corrupt, even at heart, for all issues of life stem from within (cf. Prov. 4:23). The thoughts and intents

of their hearts are often evil, loathsome, and contemptible (cf. Gen. 6:5). Their speech reveals this evil nature, as their lips talk of mischief, troublemaking (NKJV), and violence (FHV). One should not envy those whose spiritual state is so abhorrent and pitiable.

The second reason not to envy evildoers is because of the **destruction** that awaits them: “Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out” (Prov. 24:19-20). Though the wicked may seem to have their “heyday” in this life, they certainly have no reward awaiting them in the next. One must remember that indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish will be the eternal lot of all rebellious sinners (Rom. 2:8-9). Does that really sound like someone to envy?

In Proverbs 23:17-23, the wise man reveals at least five keys to refusing evil companionships and being content to follow after righteousness:

1. Do not **begrudge** sinners (Prov. 23:17).
2. **Behold** the reward set before you (Prov. 23:18).
3. **Base** your thoughts on righteousness (Prov. 23:19).
4. **Behave** as you should (Prov. 23:20-21).
5. **Buy** the truth and sell it not (Prov. 23:22-23).

Do not begrudge sinners. As has already been noted, sinners are never in an enviable position. They will one day stand before the Lord and receive the recompense of how they lived here in the flesh (2 Cor. 5:10). In the words of the Hebrews author, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). Instead of envying those who are headed for certain doom, our focus should be on fearing the Lord and keeping His commandments (Eccl. 12:13-14). As we serve Him faithfully, He will bless us and supply our every need (Phil. 4:19; cf. Matt. 6:33).

Behold the reward set before you. The New King James Version renders Proverbs 23:18, “For surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.” We must never lose sight of the reward and inheritance that awaits us as God’s children (2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:3-4). God has promised eternal life unto the faithful, and He is, indeed, faithful that promised (1 John 2:25; Heb. 10:23). Keeping our eyes fixed on the reward of heaven will help greatly in enduring the trials of this life. For the joy that was set before Him, Christ endured even the cross (Heb. 12:2).

Base your thoughts on righteousness. The wise man instructed his son (or pupil) to guide his heart in the way of righteousness (Prov. 23:19). McCord translates the phrase as, “Keep your mind on right things” (FHV). It is both fruitless and detrimental spiritually for one to busy his mind with coveting after the ungodly. There are so many blessings and benefits belonging to those who trust God and serve Him. Our focus, then, should be on God’s Word and the wisdom it provides:

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).

Behave as you should. One never acquires a taste for that which he never tries. One who has never experimented with alcohol has no problem with drunkenness. He who has maintained sexual purity often has greater fortitude when facing the temptation than one who has fallen in the past. There are simply some sins that seem so much stronger once one has yielded to them for the first time. Sin is a taskmaster (John 8:34; Rom. 6:16), and, once it has a person in its clutches, it can sometimes be very hard to shake. It is always easier not

to begin a habit than it is to break one, and youth especially need to remember this with regard to vice and evil companions. A young person who never gives in the first time to strong drink or evil company is the same who will never miss either.

Buy the truth and sell it not. Everyone would do well to learn while young the inestimable value of truth. The truth, and only the truth, can make one free (John 8:32). In counseling his pupil to buy the truth, the wise man was implying cost. It will invariably cost everyone something to have the truth in their lives. It costs time and effort (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). It may cost one the religion of his fathers (cf. Matt. 15:3-9; Gal. 1:13-16). It may even cost someone his livelihood or hobby (cf. Acts 8:9-13), but, whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice, truth is worth the price! One of the obvious places to acquire truth is often overlooked by many young people—their parents! Parents naturally love their children and should want what is best for them. Many godly parents try to instruct their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (cf. Eph. 6:4), only to have their teachings discounted or even ignored by their children. A wise child will seek the truth in all matters, taking every opportunity to “buy it up.” Such a child will especially listen to the sage counsel of his mother and father.

Endnotes

1 **The Holy Bible**, King James Version (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1989). All references are to this version unless otherwise noted.

2 W. J. Deane & S. T. Taylor-Taswell, “Proverbs,” **The Pulpit Commentary**, Volume 9, eds. H. D. M. Spence & Joseph Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1950), pp. 89-90.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

6 **The Holy Bible**, American Standard Version (Fort

Worth, TX: Star Bible Publishers, 1992). All references to this version will be noted using "ASV."

7 Deane & Taylor-Taswell, p. 89.

8 Hugo McCord, **The Everlasting Gospel** (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, 2000). All references to this version will be noted using "FHV."

9 Deane & Taylor-Taswell, p. 38.

10 **The Holy Bible**, New King James Version (Nashville,: Thomas Nelson, 1982). All references to this version will be noted using "NKJV."

11 Bert Thompson, "The Lord Giveth Wisdom Out Of His Mouth," **The Book Of Proverbs**, ed. Bill Jackson (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications), pp. 42-43.

12 Deane & Taylor-Taswell, op cit., 252.

13 Paul Sain, "The Strength of God's Man," **The Book of Proverbs**, p. 333.



About The Author

Native of Alabama. Married to Beth (Williams), 1 child. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching; Faulkner University (B. A.). Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Preaching for nine years. Local preaching, Ironaton church in Talladega, Alabama.

Part Three

**Proverbs Of
Contrast**

CHAPTER 12

Pride vs. Humility

Bobby Liddell

Commendation

THE **POWER LECTURES** CONSISTENTLY uphold the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation, presenting the Word in its purity, without fear or favor. The lectures result in one of the most usable and profitable books produced by our brethren. B. J. Clarke directs the lectureship in a splendid way, and, under the oversight of the elders of the Southaven congregation, the lectures always present sound Bible preaching on topics which are so very vital. Surely, this study of Proverbs will be another classic like the previous volumes. We are deeply indebted to the great Southaven church, her elders, her preachers, and all her members for this valuable contribution to the furtherance of the cause of Christ. May the congregation continue to be faithful to our Lord as long as time continues, and may the **POWER Lectures** continue to sound forth the Truth just as long; this is our prayer.

Introduction

Throughout the Bible, and especially frequently in the book of Proverbs, God contrasts the sin of pride with the righteous virtue of humility. Consistently, the great God and Father of mankind warns, condemns, and

promises punishment to proud, arrogant, haughty men. He instructs all to be modest, unassuming, and humble, and to such godly men, He delivers praise and promises reward. Contrasted with the eternal, merciful, mighty God is the lying, seducing devil, who tempts men to be smug in their own conceit. Satan, it seems, is the very one whose pride preceded his fall (1 Tim. 3:6). No doubt reflecting on this, Augustine said, “It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.” Heeding Divine instruction and gaining maturity in true wisdom—that is, in Bible knowledge and in Christian living—prevent arrogant pride and promote humility.

A Christian must not be puffed up (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4). Rather, as Thomas Guthrie wrote, “The Christian is like the ripening corn; the riper he grows the more lowly he bends his head.” Yet even among those who profess to be strong Christians and sound in doctrine are some who manifest ungodly pride. As a curse upon humanity, proud men shall secure their eternal damnation, and will influence others in the deadly way of ungodliness—unless they repent and return to humble service. What a contrast with the ones who, submissive to the Father’s will, quietly and effectively work to save themselves and a lost world (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16)! Humble men bring glory to God as they heed the Savior’s admonition: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

“Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Prov. 16:19; cf. Prov. 12:9). The good part, the better part, is to be lowly with the lowly, though worldly minded men loudly exclaim it is far, far better to take part in dividing the prey of the proud. In our study of the contrast of pride and humility as presented in the book of Proverbs, we shall consider several pertinent verses from Proverbs which address the subject. It is

significant to note just how often the pen of inspiration records wise sayings about these two characteristics. We shall consider this contrast of pride and humility by looking at attitudes toward the Lord, the Lord's response, relationships with men, punishment and reward, and the remedy for pride.

Attitudes Toward The Lord

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil (Prov. 3:5-7).

Trusting in the Lord, not in oneself, requires humility. The proud man trusts in himself, leaning unto his own understanding; that is, he props up himself, putting all his weight on himself. Such a dangerous attitude of heart brings the certainty of falling because no man can reject the Lord, support himself by himself, and prosper in so doing (cf. Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12). The proud man will fall. There is no doubt about it. He will find that his frail, human, foolish prop will give way, and his condition will be as that which Rabshakeh, Sennacherib's representative, boastingly declared as he questioned the confidence in which Hezekiah, king of Judah, trusted:

Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him (2 Kings 18:21).

Leaning upon one's own understanding is like leaning on a bruised (cracked or broken) reed. Recognition of one's dependence upon God and maintaining an attitude of sinful pride are mutually exclusive. The wise man will

respect God, look to Him for direction, and will follow Him with all his heart. The proud man will not trust God, for he thinks he knows better than does the Almighty God of the universe. How arrogant! How sinful!

The very first sin involved pride. The serpent told Eve that eating of the forbidden tree would make Adam and Eve as gods, knowing good and evil. She saw it was “a tree to be desired to make one wise,” so she took of the fruit and gave also to her husband (Gen. 3:4-6). Note the similarity of the appeal of the world to that of the serpent and the relationship of (1) friendship with the world, (2) pride, and (3) enmity with God as recorded by John, the “Apostle of Love”:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

One who rejects sinful pride and follows God’s Word will be directed in the right way. Notice from Proverbs 3:5-7 that he will follow the Lord in all his ways, whereas the proud man will consider himself better able to choose his own path. How many have we known just like this? Likewise, there are far too many who will acquiesce, if reluctantly, to the Lord in some instances, but defer to their own self-importance in others. Such “obedience” is not obedience at all. Saul was such a man. When God instructed him to lead the people in the utter destruction of the Amalekites, he did do part of what God wanted done, **but only because he agreed with God in part**. He did what he wanted (though he blamed the people) in the totality of his actions (1 Sam. 15:15). Thus, because he did not acknowledge God in **all** his ways, nor did he allow

God to direct his path, his pride was condemned, and he was rebuked by the prophet Samuel:

And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? (1 Sam. 15:17-19).

Saul had been “little in (his) own sight,” but he had allowed his pride in his position and power to change him to the point where he thought that he no longer had to lean upon God. His pride, in a futile effort for exaltation, brought him low. We teach the truth when we sing, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up” (cf. Jas. 4:10).

One who is wise in his own eyes may also be considered wise in the eyes of others who are carnally minded and materialistic. This “wisdom” is the opposite of true wisdom, which is to fear the Lord: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). The proud, conceited fellow will not depart from evil, for he would have to submit himself to the Lord to do so, and he is far too self-important for that! He is like the condemned, proud, rich man: “The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit” (Prov. 18:11). The proud man trusts in wealth which becomes, in his imagination, like an inaccessible city with an impenetrable wall. He does not fear the Lord: “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate” (Prov. 8:13). Those who revere themselves disdain reverence for the Lord. On the other hand, the

humble man realizes his need, and understands he cannot, by himself, direct his ways. What shall determine our attitude toward the Lord—pride or humility?

The perfect example of humble submission to God is Christ. Paul wrote by inspiration how Christ left heaven and humbled Himself to die for man, and calls upon men to have the same mind, the mind of humility:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:3-8).

Neither the power of mighty men nor of Satan himself overcame our Savior and Friend, but His powerful love and lowly submission overcame sin and death that we might also gain the victory (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Despised and rejected, shamed and mocked, He humbled Himself to bear our griefs, sorrows, and stripes; to be wounded for our transgressions; and bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53). Sinless, He suffered for our sins. We deserved to die, not Jesus. Man could not save himself by dying for his own sins, but the Son of God humbled Himself to die so that man might live. It was no accident. He came to die. In view of such a submissive sacrifice, surely man should humble himself to live for Christ.

As He faced death, He prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Again, He said, "For I

came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38).

What a perfect example for man—not our will, but God’s be done in our lives! Pride precludes such a life of submission. Proud men fight and war because of their selfish desires and evil means of fulfilling their lusts (Jas. 4:1-2). Such men are too lofty in their self-proclaimed altitude to have the right attitude. They are too proud to bow themselves to God’s will and ask Him for the blessings which He freely bestows on His loving children. They are spiritual adulterers whose friendship with the world makes them the enemies of God (Jas. 4:4-10). What a sobering thought: pride makes one the enemy of God!

The Lord’s Response

“Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly” (Prov. 3:34). The Lord scorns the scorners; that is, He scoffs at the scoffers. The Lord’s response to scoffing pride is to reject the haughty. Who dares to scoff at the Lord, as if He were equal to or beneath mere mortal man? To the lowly (humble or lowly in mind), the Lord gives grace: “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jas. 4:6). Lest one charge God with being unequal in His ways (cf. Ezek. 18:25), let all be reminded that God is love, and love is of God (1 John 4:7-8). He loved man first, and He loved man enough to send His only begotten Son to die for man (1 John 4:8-10; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Thus, God, Who loves man so, is supremely just in His dealings with man. He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35).

Man responds to God’s love by accepting or rejecting God’s grace, and by choosing to submit or not to submit to God’s will. God responds to man based upon the needs, attitudes, and actions of man. In His response to man, He unfailingly rewards each man according to that man’s true

heart and life: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10; cf. Eccl. 12:14). The proud, wicked in the sight of the Lord, forfeit God’s blessings reserved for the faithful. The humble, submissive to His will, rejoice in God’s bountiful grace. No man can truly say that God has ever been unfair in His treatment of mankind. No unrighteous man shall stand justified before God based on excuses of God’s supposed injustice. Therefore, when God gives grace to the humble, He does so in response to that man’s submission, and, when God resists the proud, He does so in righteous response to that man’s arrogance.

What right-thinking man honestly desires the God of heaven and earth to stand against him? God resists arrogant men, setting Himself to war against them! He clearly condemns haughty, self-exalting men. Peter’s pen plainly points to this truth:

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5).

Of those things which the Lord hates, first on the list is “a proud look” (Prov. 6:16-19). Those who pose on the peaks of pride stand against God and stand, whether knowingly or not, with Satan. The higher they elevate themselves, the lower they become, and the farther they are from God and Heaven. Selfishly desiring their own way, they resist God and His Word. Those who elevate God in their lives and humbly bow before Him stand with God and in opposition to Satan. As a result, they are exalted by God. Not only that, but God stands with them, blessing them with spiritual blessings in Christ as His dear children (Eph. 1:3).

When David faced Goliath, he believed that God, Whom he trusted and humbly served, would deliver him then as He had before. Goliath put his faith in his great size, mighty strength, and strong armor, and proudly defied the God of Israel. Who could defeat Goliath? Not even the God of Israel, he thought. David said, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied” (1 Sam. 17:45). God stood with the young man, for David submitted to Him. Thus, David could affirm, “And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands” (1 Sam. 17:47). He could not overcome the giant by himself, but David knew God was on his side, and, with such an ally, none could defeat him! The boasting giant lost his life at the hands of God’s humble servant that day, and David gave the glory and honor to God (cf. Matt. 5:16).

Not all will humble themselves before the Lord now, but all will someday—only then, it shall be too late for those who would not serve Him. Men who walked so proudly on earth shall be humbled before the judgment throne and punished eternally in that place of everlasting fire, outer darkness, unbearable pain, and unquenchable thirst. Yes, God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Those who realize that they are God’s creation and, but for His grace would be helpless and hopeless, humble themselves before Him and cry out for God’s mercy. They seek simply to do His will in their lives; that is, to make His will theirs. Willingly, they give up the world and pride for abundant grace now and eternal life hereafter (Mark 10:30). They do not base their hope on pretentious pride but on God’s great grace and their obedient service. As pride and humility contrast in the attitudes and actions of men, so there is a contrast in God’s response to arrogant men and to humble men.

Relationships With Men

Just as the presence of pride or the attribute of humility will affect our response to and relationship with the Lord, so will it determine our relationships with our fellow men: “The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh” (Prov. 11:17). The man who extends mercy to others also helps himself, but the one who oppresses and afflicts others also afflicts himself. This is forever and universally true. One will, by his attitude and actions, make a name for himself (cf. 1 Sam. 25:25): “Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath” (Prov. 21:24). He who deals in the wrath of pride—that is, who exhibits his lofty-minded haughtiness by breaking out in presumptuously proud passion—makes a name for himself by his arrogant scoffing. Yes, others do take notice, and most will despise and shun such a man. He will make a name for himself as a self-exalting boaster.

The humble man will seek the good advice of good men, and will, as a result, be known as cautious, prudent, and wise. The wise man wrote, “Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war” (Prov. 20:18). Every plan will prosper when prudence and proper counsel are behind it. Surely, one who plans a battle wants to have the counsel of wisdom on his side, for it is a matter of life and death. Proud men will reject such wise counsel, but the lowly will seek it. In addition to this thought, consider Proverbs 13:10: “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.” The presumptuously proud man is a maker of strife, a beginner of quarrels, and a cause of contention, but the man who is willing to be advised or to consider advice is the man who is wise.

“In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them” (Prov. 14:3). Wise

men carefully control their tongues. Just as they are quick to listen, and to be advised, they are slow to speak (Jas. 1:19). The fool is always ready to let people know what he thinks (and often when he does not think), for he wants to be heard. Thus, he speaks in great swelling terms of haughty highness, loudly and long. The wise man guards his speech and is guarded by it.

The humble man does not presume a place of honor for himself. He will sit in the lower seat on the back row, lest he put himself in a position not his:

Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king,
and stand not in the place of great men: For
better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up
hither; than that thou shouldst be put lower in
the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have
seen (Prov. 25:6-7).

Literally, do not honor yourself before royalty, and do not position yourself where older, nobler men should be, for it is better to be invited to ascend higher than to be humiliated by being sent down or away by (or in the presence of) the nobleman. Jesus expressed the same thought to the Pharisees:

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:7-11).

Nor does the humble man “toot his own horn”: “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Prov. 27:2). After one preacher excitedly explained how great he was, his sermon, not surprisingly, demonstrated how mistaken he was. If praise comes our way, let it be from another, not from ourselves. Even then, let us be careful to treat it like perfume, to enjoy the scent briefly, but not to swallow it. If we seek to please men because we love the praise of men, we will forfeit the praise of God (cf. Gal. 1:10; John 12:42-43).

One common characteristic of wicked and arrogant wealthy men is their avaricious attempts to take from the weak. This action quite often works; however, observe the declaration of inspiration touching this point: “The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out” (Prov. 28:11). The man who trusts in his riches and is wise in his own eyes may think he has the advantage over the poor and weak. However, if the one whom the rich man would oppress has understanding, he can get to the bottom of the rich man’s craftiness and overcome him.

Punishment And Reward

Why will pride bring punishment? “An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin” (Prov. 21:4). The elevated eye, the emotions of arrogance, and the life work of the ungodly are offences. Sin deserves punishment (Rom. 6:23). Sin brings shame: “When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom” (Prov. 11:2). When one sins presumptuously, he brings upon himself disgrace, dishonor, and reproach. Included in the consequences of such transgression is the condemnation reserved for the wicked. With the lowly is the wisdom of circumspection. He lives in such a way as to know the blessings of the abundant life now and eternally (John 10:10).

Why does pride bring punishment? “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished” (Prov. 16:5). God will not acquit the lofty-hearted man, for he is abhorred by God as an abomination. Nor can high-minded sinners strengthen themselves sufficiently, though they join together in their rebellious disobedience and haughty disregard for God and the Gospel to try to avoid God’s punishment.

“The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow” (Prov. 15:25). Note the irony. God will make desolate the house of the arrogant, but He will make the house of the desolate to stand. The Lord has the power to bring down the lofty—along with his house (cf. 1 Kings 16:3), and He has the power to establish the house of the lowly.

Why punishment for the proud? Because of the self-deception of conceit which convinces the proud man he does not need to listen to God, to be instructed of God, or to respond to God’s commands: “Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov. 26:12; cf. Prov. 25:27). Surely, the silly, stupid man has more to be expected of him than one who so foolishly trusts in himself and is wise in his own eyes. The fool can be taught, whereas the conceited man refuses instruction. Such an attitude sets the stage for punishment with everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:7-9; cf. Prov. 18:12).

Why reward for the humble? As noted above, he is wise, teachable, receptive, and submissive to the Lord. Thus, the Lord promises blessing in this life, and in the life to come: “By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life” (Prov. 22:4). Who could ask for more? “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat” (Prov. 28:25). The high-minded man is a contentious

meddler, a quarrelling brawler who sows discord and creates strife. How different is the man who trusts in the Lord (cf. Prov. 3:5-7), and looks to Him as his sure refuge! He shall prosper, being satisfied by the Lord's bounty and blessing. Thus, the lowly minded man trusts the Lord today and looks to tomorrow with the attitude, "If the Lord will" (Jas. 4:13-15). He heeds the admonition, "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1).

Arrogant conceit in resisting God is seed for a harvest of eternal tears. Though God promises punishment of the proud, He holds out His loving arms to receive those who humbly seek Him. He offers His grace and requires man's active response in humbling himself in the sight of the Lord. Such is God's recipe for restoration. The contrast of pride and humility is the contrast of haughty sin and humble service. Ultimately, the contrast is that of eternal punishment and everlasting reward.

Remedy For Pride

Having noted the problems of pride, which include its harm to relationships with fellow men, and with the Lord of heaven, and the sure punishment promised for the sin of haughty arrogance, what can be done as a remedy? Hear the Word of the Lord. First, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility" (Prov. 15:33). Just as the proper reverence for the Lord is the discipline of wisdom, so humility is the road to honor. Let all who have sought to lift up themselves in wicked disregard for the Lord's way turn to walk the road of humility. Listen to the words of Proverbs 30:32: "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth." If a man has wickedly disgraced himself in boasting or self-promotion, or if he has planned in his heart his self-

exaltation, the inspired instruction is that he should bridle his tongue and cease from such sin.

Remember, “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Prov. 29:23). Plainly put, the way down is up. Jonathan Edwards said, “Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil’s reach as humility.” Compromise, even in one point, gives the devil the advantage and the ultimate victory in that one’s life.

Thus, if one would be free from the guilt of sinful pride, he must cease from his pompous arrogance and humble himself before the Lord. This is not easy for one beset with the sin of pride. The tendency may be to try to hide from responsibility and to hide one’s sin, but, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13). One who conceals his transgressions shall not do so to his profiting; rather, the one who confesses and forsakes sin will find the compassion of God. So, the remedy for pride is not denial, concealment, excuse, nor accusation. The remedy is to forsake the high mind of pride to walk the high road of humility.

The brother of arrogance is aloofness. Proud, self-sufficient men see no need to humble themselves in coming to God. They reason that God should seek them, on their terms, if He desires their company. To bow before God would be, to them, a sign of weakness, a symbol of dependency, and a token of flawed manhood. What folly do haughty men show who forfeit the precious promise of God’s work! To maintain one’s pride (to “save face”), some go to great lengths to avoid repentance and a public confession of sin. To proud, unrepentant men, proclaimers of the Gospel must not yield, even though they become one’s enemy for telling him the truth (Gal. 4:16). The one genuinely penitent has no room for pride in his heart.

Still, proud men reject God’s call: “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after

God: God is not in all his thoughts” (Psm. 10:4). Pride will not allow one to weep over his sins. He is “too big a man” to admit he has sinned, and his heart is too hard to mourn. Somehow, he assumes, God will save him because he is just too important for anything bad to happen to him, but his confidence is as groundless as that of Benhadad. To him, King Ahab of Israel said, “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1 Kings 20:11).

Conclusion

Perhaps the best-known Proverb against the sin of pride is this: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). Just as surely as the Bible is God’s Word, arrogance brings ruin, and the one who lifts up himself shall surely fall. Most men reject such a statement, and pursue their self-exaltation without regard to either the temporal or eternal consequences. On one occasion, the mother of Zebedee’s children requested that her two sons might sit one on the right hand and the other on the left hand of Christ in His kingdom:

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-28).

Christ came to serve. Haughty men have no interest in serving, but God’s promise is true. He will lift up those who humble themselves. Preceding such honor is humility (Prov. 18:12; cf. Prov. 22:4; Prov. 29:23). Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little

child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:4). Again, He said, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12; cf. Luke 14:11).

David, in pleading penitence, wrote, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psm. 51:17). On one occasion, Jesus spoke a parable “unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9). In it, He contrasts two men, one a Pharisee and the other a publican, and two characteristics, pride and humility:

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:10-14).

The one who so desired to be uplifted was abased and the other who, trembling, sought God’s mercy and would not lift up his eyes for shame, was justified. What man of that day would have thought such could happen? The humble servant of God is not acclaimed by the world. Those who impress with their loud and much speaking, and their ostentatious displays, receive the world’s recognition, but one’s recognition by the world will be worth less than nothing before the God of the universe. In the words of David’s song, “And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou

mayest bring them down” (2 Sam. 22:28). In hell, there will be the sad and eternal reminder of a wasted, self-centered life. Peter admonishes, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet. 5:6). As there is a contrast between pride and humility in Proverbs, there is a contrast in the measure by which success in life is appraised, and the destiny of life everlasting.



About The Author

Native of Alabama. Married to Joan, 3 children, 2 grandchildren. Graduate: Walker College; University of Alabama; Memphis School of Preaching; Southern Christian University (B. A., M. A.). Local preaching, AL, FL, TN. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states, Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Latvia. Director, Memphis School of Preaching lectures and Editor of lectureship book. Author of many articles for brotherhood papers; several quarterlies for Bible class; numerous chapters in lectureship books. Dean of Admissions, Associate Director and instructor with Memphis School of Preaching. Local preaching, Cordova, TN.

CHAPTER 13

Work And Laziness In Proverbs

Gary Summers

Introduction

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE actually famous for being lazy? The most well-known are fictional. Beetle Bailey tries to “nap” whenever he can outwit Sarge, but he usually gets caught and punished. There was a briefly celebrated slothful soul whose name reached the airwaves in the 1950s thanks to Barbara and the Boys: “Hooty Sapperticker.” Actually, the song was so bad that it did not make the Top Forty, and most people have never heard of this attempt to glorify laziness.¹ Far fewer people would have ever heard the song, had not popular disc jockey Art Roberts² (with WLS in Chicago from 1960-1970) decided to promote an annual Hooty Sapperticker Day as part of his program. The song does not have many lyrics—the writer was probably too lazy to devote much time to them.

The most famous fictional, quintessentially lazy creature is the cartoon cat Garfield. The June 20th, 2001 daily comic strip begins with our hero totally enshrouded by his blanket while Jon scolds him: “Garfield, get out of that bed! Where’s your sense of wonder?” In the second frame, the famous feline has not moved a muscle, and Jon continues badgering him: “Where’s your sense of adventure?” In the final frame, Garfield’s face is visible,

along with one paw, which has grabbed his hapless owner by the shirt collar. With a menacing look, he replies, “They ran off with my sense of humor.” For Garfield, slumber is exciting. The August 20th strip (2001) also contains three sections. In the first one, Garfield smiles at the reader and says, “I think I’ll take a nap.” As he thoughtfully develops this notion, he adds, “Then doze awhile...and then top it all off with a nice snooze.” Finally, as the smile remains intact, he provides his concluding advice: “Remember, kids, for well-balanced rest, you must have something from the three basic sleep groups each day.”

“Energy-challenged” people are not usually in the spotlight because they have no achievements or accomplishments to their credit, which is, of course, the way they want it. Rumor has it that, in front of a gathering of vagrants, a man offered one hundred dollars to the laziest man present. All of them raised an arm except one man, who kept his hand in his pocket. He pulled it up until it was visible and said, “Just put the money here.”

The Scriptures say quite a bit about this kind of individual—none of it complimentary. Laziness is not derived from God, nor does it accurately characterize Him. As Jesus said, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (John 5:17).³ That only leaves the devil as sloth’s originator, but, when he convinces people to move in that direction, he is not bidding them to follow his example. If he himself ever rests, it is difficult to discern. Between the erroneous philosophies and immoralities in the world and the false doctrines in the church (which have captured some of our brightest men), it is impossible to imagine Satan ever relaxing—even for a few moments. Therefore, no one should listen to him regarding the avoidance of work, for, to persuade people in that direction, he would need to be a hypocrite. About the only good feature about him is his work ethic, and he uses that for the destruction of men’s souls.

In Praise Of Diligence

“Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Eccl. 9:10). Regardless of the cynicism that pervades this book, this statement is true. The only opportunity we have for achievement is now. Did not Jesus say, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day: the night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4)? Whatever we plan to accomplish, we had better be diligent in doing it while we have the opportunity. The rich man learned too late that his chance to be benevolent to Lazarus had ended—as had his moment to be evangelistic (Luke 16:19-31).⁴

In the book of Proverbs, diligence merits several rewards, the most obvious of which is material gain: “He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich” (Prov. 10:4). A similar thought is expressed in Proverbs 13:11: “Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase.” Those who lack ambition often resort to shady tactics. In business they may cheat with a false system of weights (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 16:11; Prov. 20:10; Prov. 20:23; Mic. 6:11), or they may charge a premium price for shoddy labor and substandard materials. Many construction companies are building furiously today but tomorrow are out of business, nowhere to be found.

Hard workers do not go unnoticed. They and their families prosper because of their diligence: “He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough” (Prov. 28:19). “Whoever keeps the fig tree will eat its fruit; So he who waits on his master will be honored” (Prov. 27:18). Patience, steadfastness, and endurance are all important qualities. The rewards of diligence may spread to further honors:

“Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men” (Prov. 22:29). Whoever heard of Hooty Sapperticker (or anyone of his ilk) being honored by a king? When an employer seeks to hire someone, he is always interested in the applicant who is reliable and who gets things done.

One would think that the prospect of starvation would be motivation enough for anyone to be diligent: “The person who labors, labors for himself, for his hungry mouth drives him on” (Prov. 16:26). But, as we shall see momentarily, some lack the inclination to work altogether. The avoidance of work only makes things worse: “The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slothful will be put to forced labor” (Prov. 12:24). As mothers are prone to tell their children, “Do your assigned work with a cheerful attitude, and do it right the first time. You’ll be amazed how fast the job gets done.” Many children have not heeded the wisdom of this advice and were thus made to feel as if they had been put to forced labor.

Most people do not become successful in a haphazard manner. “Plan your work and work your plan” is a modern catch-phrase that is helpful, but Solomon taught the same principle three thousand years ago: “The plans of the diligent surely lead to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty” (Prov. 21:5). Those who fail to set goals have no problem in meeting them. The only way this philosophy works well is if one finds himself in a situation such as the men of the Alamo were. When being attacked by an army of five thousand men, a man could aim just about anywhere and hit the enemy. Usually, however, one needs to be more precise.

As stewards over what God has entrusted to us, we ought to know what we have, where we are, and where we are going: “Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds; for riches are not forever, nor

does a crown endure to all generations” (Prov. 27:23-24). Preparing for the future is certainly a Biblical concept (see also Proverbs 27:25-27). Then why did Jesus say, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow” (Matt. 6:34)? Jesus is cautioning His followers against anxiety—against thinking that everything depends on us and forgetting that God cares and provides for us (Matt. 6:33). Solomon is dealing with the other extreme of allowing God to take care of everything (either intentionally or out of indifference).

Perhaps the wording is not significant, but the same point made in so many other verses is also made in Proverbs 13:4: “The soul of a sluggard desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.” This concept is typical: the sluggard has nothing, but the diligent gets rich. What is different is the use of the word “soul.” It may be that the person’s entire being is intended. The sluggard is thoroughly lazy; diligence comes from the very depths of a person. Still, the Bible student cannot help but wonder if a spiritual application might be made here as well. Is it not the case that the spiritual sluggard’s soul never amounts to anything, while that of the spiritual worker always grows and prospers (3 John 2)?

We dare not undervalue this earnest desire to accomplish worthwhile physical and spiritual goals in our lives: “diligence is man’s precious possession” (Prov. 12:27). What corroborates the truth of this statement? The fact is that one cannot even come to God apart from diligence: “for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). Those who have a casual, passing interest in God will never be saved; people must earnestly desire to know Him. These will search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) until they know the truth and are set free from their sins (John 8:31-32). They gladly receive the Word and are

baptized (Acts 2:41), and they with diligence pursue spiritual growth (2 Pet. 1:5-7). The lazy individual will allow the Word to be snatched away out of his heart (Matt. 13:19) and will never obey the Gospel or, if so, continue in it. No wonder diligence is a precious possession.

The Folly Of Indolence

Many still remember the old **Tonight Show** starring Johnny Carson. Occasionally, during his monologue, he would make a statement such as, “It was really hot in Los Angeles today.” Right on cue, Ed McMahon would ask, “How hot was it?” The reply would be, “It was so hot that the birds were using potholders when they pulled worms from the ground.” The opposite weather condition might elicit the comment: “It was so cold today that the lawyers were walking around with their hands in their own pockets.”

It almost seems as if Solomon had made the statement, “I saw a really lazy man today,” and someone asked, “How lazy was he?” Solomon’s answer is, “I’ll tell you how lazy he was.”

1. He was so lazy that he did not want to get up out of bed. His favorite saying is, “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep” (Prov. 6:9-11). Probably we have all had mornings like that—especially when the alarm clock goes off inordinately early. But the kind of condition described here is chronic. Laziness feeds on itself: “Slothfulness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger” (Prov. 19:15). One senses no spark of ambition whatsoever. If he had his way, this man would remain in bed permanently: “As a door turns on its hinges, so does the slothful man turn on his bed” (Prov. 26:14).

2. He was so lazy that he refused to go outside—for safety’s sake. “The slothful man says, ‘There is a lion

in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!” (Prov. 26:13). Is such a reality likely? Sure, we may get tornado warnings a few days out of the year, also. Life is always uncertain; can staying indoors protect us? How do we guarantee safety against fire, slipping and falling, or thieves breaking in to steal? Being fearful that we “shall be slain in the streets” is a preposterous way to live (Prov. 22:13). Henry James once wrote a story which illustrated the folly of this kind of thinking, titled “The Beast in the Jungle.” John Marcher was so certain that something catastrophic would happen to him that he spent his entire life secluded. It was only as he approached death that it occurred to him that the horrible thing he was to experience was not “a lion in the streets,” but nothing at all. He spent his entire life being afraid to live; consequently, nothing ever happened to him. A true sluggard would probably be envious of such a man.

3. He was too lazy to work or plow: “The sluggard will not plow because of winter; Therefore he will beg during the harvest and have nothing” (Prov. 20:4). Although the best time to plow the ground is in the fall after the harvest—to prepare the ground for the following year—the lazy person will not do it then because of the cold. In the spring the rains make it difficult. He just cannot find the right time to work. He always allows something to get in the way. Apparently, some in Israel subscribed to the philosophy set forth by Paul: “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). God made provisions for widows, the fatherless, and strangers (Deut. 24:19-21; cf. Jas. 1:27), but nowhere are appropriations made for the lazy. He does without.

4. He was so lazy that he did not take care of his property. The reader has probably seen one or more places that looked like the following description:

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; So your poverty will come like a prowler, and your want like an armed man (Prov. 24:30-34).

One is tempted to ask, “How did this person ever end up with any land to begin with?” The Israelites’ land was passed down in the family from generation to generation. Undoubtedly, he had inherited it but had never done anything with it. Since his father died (or his brothers), he had let things go. It does not take a well-cared-for estate long to deteriorate due to neglect. The scene described above did not occur overnight; it was gradual. Sin is like that: we allow the world to get by with a little more influence over us each day, and eventually we are inundated. The profane language that is commonplace now on television series such as **Law and Order** would have outraged most people fifteen years ago. The nudity that was prominent (not incidental) in the miniseries **Helen of Troy** (broadcast back in April on USA) would have scandalized people a decade ago. Movies have aided in the acceptance of such corruptions, but very little occurs overnight; rather, the profane spreads slowly, like a cancer, until the damage is done.

The ruin is as thorough, however, as if a robber or armed man broke in and stole everything of value. It may take longer for the sluggard to lose all of his assets, but eventually his inheritance becomes as worthless as if he gambled it all away. This individual’s attitude is harmful to himself, his family, and his property.

5. He was too lazy to do any work. “The desire of the slothful kills him, for his hands refuse to labor” (Prov. 21:25).

All people have something by which they are motivated: popularity, wealth, social standing, reputation, favor with God. The man Solomon describes has one overriding goal, also—to avoid work. He has an aversion to it much like Maynard G. Krebs on the old television series **The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis**. That lovable beatnik (played by Bob Denver, who later became Gilligan) always recoiled with apprehension whenever that four-letter word was mentioned.

The problem is that this attitude is self-destructive. Just as some people cannot bring themselves to say, “I’m sorry,” the sluggard cannot force himself to work; his hands refuse to cooperate even if a fit of madness overtakes him and he is temporarily so inclined. This desire to avert honorable labor is to his own detriment—even to the point of his death.

6. He was so lazy that he could not do any assigned job well. After he has squandered his inheritance, he may occasionally have to earn just enough to subsist, but he cannot be counted on: “As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him” (Prov. 10:26). We may not all know how vinegar sets the teeth on edge, but just about everyone knows how smoke affects the eyes. It is not easy to accomplish much when one’s eyes are closed and in need of massaging. Both elements are also irritating, as is the slacker who fails to complete his assigned duty in either a timely or competent manner. The one who hired him ends up provoked, frustrated, and probably even chagrined.

7. He was so lazy that he would not even go out and hunt for food. The same ploy that he made to avoid working outdoors will also keep him from hunting game (Prov. 22:13). But suppose that he became as famished as Esau was when he sold his birthright to his brother Jacob—he might just venture into the forest and bring back some fresh meat for dinner.

8. He was so lazy that he refused to prepare it to eat. “The slothful man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man’s precious possession” (Prov. 12:27). How is this possible, we ask? Surely, if this individual goaded himself this far, he would have worked up an appetite, roasted it as soon as possible, and had a feast. But, no, Solomon is showing how deeply ingrained in him is this attitude. It gets even worse.

9. He was so lazy that, once prepared, he could not even complete the action of eating! “A slothful man buries his hand in the bowl, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again” (Prov. 19:24). Yes, “it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth” (Prov. 26:15). Surely, these descriptions must involve a touch of hyperbole. In this writer’s most exhausted and weakest of moments, failing to eat is not a viable option. If the food is close enough to reach with either fingers or silverware, just count on the fact that it is headed straight for an open mouth—to be consumed with gusto.

10. He was so lazy that he could only dream of possessing what honest toil would provide. As close to success as this idle soul ever gets is to imagine what it would be like: “The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich” (Prov. 13:4). How awful to be imprisoned by one’s own laziness! Even when he envies the prosperous lives of others and covets what they have, he knows nevertheless that he will never achieve it because he remains locked in a cell from which he can never emerge. Having chosen to shun work at all costs, his mind cannot release him from this highest of priorities. He has no chance to escape this dungeon; his freedom to be blessed by God was forfeited when he committed himself to this course of action. Like a brute beast, he is bound to what has now become instinctive.

Sins Associated With Sluggards

1. He is an excuse maker. If the streets are free from lions, some other problem will arise to prevent him from expending effort. Other external conditions will serve as well; in the parable of the talents, the one who hid his money in the earth even tried to blame his master. He complains, “Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours” (Matt. 25:24-25). His lord did not reply, “Why, how thoughtful! Yes, I see that my money is intact and that you have taken great care to preserve it. I really appreciate the fact that you did not invest it foolishly or lose it.” No, his lord called him a **wicked** and **slothful** servant (Matt. 25:26). God sees through all the pretense that people adopt to fool each other. The fact is that the one-talent man simply did not want to spend his time or energy working on behalf of another. He tucked the money away and never gave it another thought. Then he vainly imagined that he could convince his lord with specious rationalization that he was worthy of a reward. He failed. The lord identifies the root of his problem: he is wicked and slothful. He possesses no self-respect as it pertains to the quality of work he does; he has no desire to please his master. The pronouncement made against him is accurate.

2. He brings shame upon others. As a son, he is an embarrassment: “He who gathers in the summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame” (Prov. 10:5). Likewise, if he were married, he would humiliate his wife and children. Many a woman is proud to be the wife of her spouse, but others have grown accustomed to mortification. One might think that a slothful person would consider changing—if not for his own sake, then on behalf of those whom he loves. However,

this is the man who puts his hand in the dish and will not bring it back to his mouth. The commitment he has to lethargy transcends any other consideration. However impractical it may be and regardless of who suffers as a result of his actions, he is determined to pursue his course of inactivity.

3. He's a talker, not a doer: "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty" (Prov. 14:23). This writer once had a neighbor who fit this description perfectly. Every so often he would stop by the house and confide his latest "get-rich-quick" scheme. He enjoyed regaling people with his story of the bank president who admitted that his idea was sound and required no essential investment. Sometimes he would talk about finding winning lottery tickets that others had thrown away, apparently not realizing their value. He could keep up his end of the conversation and everyone else's, too.

The man had not always been lazy; for a number of years, he made good money with respectable jobs, but then he simply quit (mid-life crisis?). His wife bore up well, although it had to be difficult for her. Somehow, they lost the house in which they had lived for years, but he never ran out of advice for others on how to increase their wealth. As a member of the board for a Christian school, he always had a surplus of ideas on how to obtain more students and more money. At one meeting, he made a suggestion and was told, "That's a good proposal, why don't you run with that?" He actually replied, "My contribution is to think of these things, and then others can carry them out."

So what did he do with his time? Apparently, it was devoted to thinking. He was long on speech and short on performance: "He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding" (Prov. 12:11). Unfortunately, we have an entire society that "follows frivolity." The entertainment

industry is coaxing billions of dollars a year away from people who could spend such money more wisely. Ambition on the part of many has waned, and many have chosen to be passive rather than active.

Many find it easier to panhandle by approaching on crutches or in wheelchair cars at intersections. They pretend to be disabled veterans; sometimes they slur their speech, as if prohibited from speaking correctly, so that they might elicit sympathy from good-hearted folks. Some of them take in as much as \$40 an hour. And then there are those who visit church buildings, soliciting funds for themselves and/or their children. How many preachers have been tempted to tell these individuals who frequently reek of tobacco smoke that, if they would quit spending a fortune on cigarettes, they would have enough rent money or food for the baby? While it is true that some occasionally fall upon hard times, it is more often the case that some have pursued frivolity and idle chatter rather than a meaningful course of life.

4. His life is fraught with problems at every turn, and he exercises a bad influence on others: “The way of a slothful man is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway” (Prov. 15:19). Most commentators suggest a meaning here of a contrast on the **manner** in which each man travels through life. In other words, the idle individual sees only obstacles in his way, thus making it difficult ever to get anything accomplished. The upright, however, does not consider any problem to be insurmountable; he looks for solutions.⁵ Would not these same things be true from a different perspective? Anyone following the example set by the sluggard is going to have a very rough path to travel. He has not cleared the way for anyone else; if anything, he has made it more difficult. The righteous soul always makes the road a little bit easier for those who come after.

The difference between the two is that one is a trailblazer while the other is mainly a complainer who would have fit in well with the Israelites in the wilderness.

5. **He is a destroyer.** Proverbs 18:9 provides insight into the lazy man's real character: "He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer." The King James chose to use the word "waster" rather than "destroyer," but the American Standard, the New American Standard, and the New King James all go with the more severe idea. Either concept is true, but for the slothful to be a brother to destruction provides a more vivid picture of the intensity of the problem. The first image that comes to mind when viewing "great destroyer" is Satan. No one has ever been, or ever could be, more destructive than the devil, and to be equated with him exposes the true nature of indolence. Satan has destroyed families, deceived the pious, corrupted the virtuous, distracted godly men from their highest priorities, and ripped asunder congregations of the Lord's church. He is a destroyer.

In what sense is one with a lazy spirit a destroyer? Everything he is associated with deteriorates: his reputation, his work, his family, his friends, his property. What improvements does he make? What positive benefit does he provide to anyone around him? He tarnishes everything with which he comes into contact. His personal example would not encourage anyone to achieve. It was reported by several how inspired so many were when the movie **Chariots of Fire** was released over twenty years ago. Coaches arranged for their basketball teams to watch this story of two world-famous athletes from the 1924 Olympic Games. Needless to say, not every team that viewed the movie could win the tournament, but the players' level of commitment increased because they were inspired by the examples. A sluggard can do nothing but serve as a discouragement and a destroyer of the desire to

excel. His message is one of “My mediocrity and substandard work are enough to get by; you’ll get by, also.”

6. Despite all of these negatives, he has a good self-image: “The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly” (Prov. 26:16). We cannot help but be reminded of the survey that was conducted about five years ago, in which Asian students scored in the highest percentiles on math exams. Americans were way down the list. The ironic thing is that the former did not rate their skills very highly (although they were quite proficient) while the latter imagined that they would finish near the top. In other words, United States’ students finished poorly in the competition, but felt good about their abilities. Self-deception is a wonderful face-saver. We can just ignore the evidence and pretend that everything is all right.

Such is the approach of the sluggard. Does he notice the sorry condition of his land? Does it bother him that he and his family lack food? Does it matter that he has the power to remedy these deficiencies but refuses to do so? No, he has deceived himself into thinking that he is right and that the world is all wrong! Reality matters little. The Scriptures declare his end in passage after passage, as has already been shown. The one who refuses to work, however, can easily ignore and discount Divine warnings: “Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread” (Prov. 20:13). Unfortunately, he possesses more confidence in himself than in the wisdom of God. And he places a tremendous value upon his own abilities and judgment.

Spiritual Sluggards

Before we become incensed and outraged by such folks who, in our day and time, are a drain upon society—since some of our welfare programs reward “labor-challenged”

recipients⁶—we ought to examine ourselves to see if we are spiritual sluggards who are having an adverse effect upon the church. Consider the following review of the material presented with spiritual applications.

1. Are some so lazy that they do not want to get out of bed on Sunday mornings? Is their favorite saying, “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep”? If they know better than to miss worship, does this attitude keep them from making it to Bible study—on time?

2. Are some so lazy that they refuse to go outside—for safety’s sake? How often do people complain that the weather is just too prohibitive? “It’s icy; it’s snowing.” The same weather conditions will not prevent 50,000 football fans from risking the elements to watch a playoff game, but the people of Almighty God are too timid to travel across town for Wednesday evening Bible study. In the south, it gets worse: people stay in because of rain.

3. Are some too lazy to plow and sow the seed of the kingdom? How can they pray for a harvest of souls, when they never plant?

4. Are some so lazy that they cannot take care of their spiritual property—the Scriptures which have been entrusted to them? Hosea’s generation was destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). It was not that the Scriptures were unavailable in either oral or written form; they just did not regard as important their value.

5. Are some so lazy that they never have time to do any work in the kingdom of God? They have time for their children’s scouting programs and band and sports and their own recreational activities—but not for the things the church needs done. Their hands just refuse to do any work (often even the simplest of tasks) because, after all, that is what preachers are paid for and why elders are appointed, right?

6. Are some so lazy that they cannot do any assigned job well? Most of us recognize that calling on a visitor to our worship assembly is something that needs to be done as soon as possible. How many times have brethren agreed to spend the fifteen to twenty minutes it takes to do so but neglected to follow through? One time this writer gave one of the congregation's best families someone to call upon who lived close by them; they kept saying they would make the visit, but after four weeks they had not squeezed it into their schedule. Some brethren have been assigned a project to oversee, and literally months went by without their completing the assigned work.

In other situations brethren have been part of programs that were working well, but they simply quit participating in them. In one community the church operated a bus program that was able to get around ten children of varying ages to ride. One day the man who drove the route on Sunday mornings said, "Find someone else." When pressed as to the reason for quitting, he admitted, "I'm tired of it." Others took turns for a while, but those who had volunteered to teach on the bus also lost interest; so before long this writer ended up doing all the driving, and his wife did all the teaching.

In the same congregation, the man who operated the printing press came in one day and said, "You'll have to find someone else to run off the bulletin." When asked for a reason, he acknowledged, "I'm tired of it." Since no one else knew how to operate the cantankerous piece of equipment, a mimeograph machine was purchased for the preacher to use.

Another program that proved successful but short-lived was an evangelistic effort. Two hundred homes (the minimum required when using a postal permit) were selected to receive a week apart three different brochures,

the last of which announced that members of the congregation would be calling on them on Thursday evening. The first time eight couples participated, and each pair had to knock only twenty-five doors. Five Bible studies were set up. The following month only five couples came to work, thus forcing some to knock some additional doors. Two Bible studies were set up. The next (and final) month only three couples came. Why is it that, when something is successful, brethren want to quit doing it? If an idea was not working well (or at all), it would be understandable that other concepts be explored and that a different program of work be adopted, but what accounts for lack of involvement when good is being accomplished, if not slothfulness? Not surprisingly, this congregation ceased to exist within two years of the situations described above.

7. Some are so lazy that they will not hunt for any work to do in the Lord's kingdom. Despite the fact that we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10) and that Christ has purified "for Himself His own special people, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14), many brethren choose to be sluggards. The admonitions "to be careful to maintain good works" (Tit. 3:8; Tit. 3:14) fall on deaf ears, as does the fact which James cites repeatedly: "Faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:14; Jas. 2:17; Jas. 2:20; Jas. 2:24; Jas. 2:26). Unlike the slothful man of Proverbs, however, these "Christians" will show up to eat at potlucks and make certain that the food reaches their mouths.

As if these poor attitudes were not enough, those who refuse to work in the church exhibit the same sins as those who refuse to work in the world.

1. Some are excuse makers. They always have a reason for not being present in worship or for not participating in any spiritual endeavor. Their excuses range from barely plausible to incredibly silly. After

repeated efforts of eliciting support from such brethren, most members quit asking them, knowing that they will have to listen to the 42nd verse of the same song: "It was the third anniversary of the day that uncle Billy stubbed his toe on the radiator and had to be taken to the emergency room and on the way there the ambulance was struck by an ice cream truck and...." God knows the hearts and thoughts of men; we may deceive ourselves into believing our own propaganda, but Jesus can distinguish between a faithful servant and a spiritual sluggard. Whereas the child of God should be intensely grateful for the salvation purchased for Him by His Master, too often he feels no compulsion to live "for Him who died for" us (2 Cor. 5:15).

2. Some bring shame on the church and particularly on Jesus: "But why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). In what sense can they who call themselves Christians belong to Him when they defy the commandments of the Christ and the apostles? A servant who refuses to work brings no glory to his Master. The attitude that causes brethren to reject one commandment would lead them to break every commandment with which they happen to disagree.

3. Some *talk a good fight, but they are not doers.* A few can pray so fervently that it sounds like they just left the Father's throne area in heaven, but their actions belie their speech. Over the years every preacher and elder has come in contact with some who, from their conversation, indicate that they are the most faithful servants on earth, but they have no real involvement in the work of the church. They talk a good fight but are nowhere to be seen when the battle begins. One college student was overheard to tell a visitor about the congregation, "You'll really like it here; we have a very active youth group." It was an excellent commendation;

the only problem was that, although she knew the truth of what she was saying, she herself never participated in those events she was lauding. Unfortunately, for all those whose devotion is from the lips outward, Jesus accepts only those who **do** His will (Matt. 7:21-27).

4. Some brethren set a negative example which serves as a hindrance to others. Influence is something that we all possess, like it or not. When sinners obey the Gospel and have interaction with other members of the body of Christ, they usually form friendships. If their commitment level is high, they may attach themselves to those who do a considerable amount of work. But in every congregation they may also choose to become like the idle brethren, who talk well but contribute little to the well-being of the church. In congregations that have an abundance of idle worshippers, new converts may conclude that they are the norm and that the workers are fanatics.

5. The slothful Christian is a destroyer. First of all, he destroys his own soul. Jesus pronounced judgment on his soul: “And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:30). Second, he may be a destroyer of others. People generally feel that there is safety in numbers; the more indolent Christians there are, the more comfortable everyone becomes.

Thus, the spiritual sluggard is influencing others towards damnation. At the very least, he is a discouragement to all those striving to be faithful and diligent servants of God. If his attitude predominates, it will destroy the church (in his area—not entirely). Congregations need brethren who are encouragers like Barnabas, and the brotherhood needs congregations that inspire others, as Thessalonica and Macedonia did (1 Thess. 1:6-8; 2 Cor. 8:1-5).

Conclusion

Solomon provided a cure to the problem of physical and spiritual torpor:

Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest (Prov. 6:6-8).

Two characteristics of the ant stand out. First, this insect is a self-starter. No one needs to coerce or shame an ant into doing her work. Each one is willing, of her own accord, to do what needs to be done. How the church would benefit from brethren equally motivated! When has any congregation profited from “lazy gluttons” (Tit. 1:12)? The church that has “a little strength” is the one who is rewarded with “an open door” (Rev. 3:8).

The second quality of the ant worthy of imitation is that she not only begins a task, but she sees it through to the end. She does not quit until the goal is obtained. When the food is gathered in the harvest, then is the time to rest. Christians too have a time to labor and a time to rest: “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9). But now it is time for Christians to labor, for “the night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4). Jesus said that “the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few” (Matt. 9:37). He also said that the harvest (of souls) is not future but **now** (John 4:35). The harvest is ongoing, however; it will not end until Jesus returns. If we expect to be rewarded then, we must be faithful participants in the ongoing harvest of souls (evangelism) now. **Then** will God’s faithful laborers hear the words they have anticipated for so long: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt. 25:21).

Endnotes

1 To find out more about this song, the reader may go to www.google.com and type in "Hooty Sapperticker." He will find that humor columnist Dave Barry wrote that this may be the worst song of all time. Also the song, according to one of the Web sites, is a favorite at strip clubs, which information hopefully will lie outside the reader's experience.

2 He closed every show by saying, "This has been a work of Art. Excelsior!"

3 All quotations are from the New King James unless otherwise specified.

4 Both Ecclesiastes 9:10 and Luke 16:19-31 deny any doctrine of a second chance (reincarnation, purgatory, premillennialism, or Mormonism).

5 This is a thought presented in John Lennon's 1981 song "Watching the Wheels," which, ironically, is about a man who has given up the work he once regarded as important.

6 Many welfare programs are not only administered improperly; they actually discourage self-improvement.



About The Author

Preaching for 31 years. Married to Barbara 37 years, 2 children, 3 grandchildren. Graduate: Illinois State University (B. A. in English, M. A. in Literature). Involved in Christian education in Peoria, IL: board member; teacher; principal. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Contributes articles to various brotherhood papers. Recorded two series for World Video Bible School: *The New Age Movement*; *Angels*.

CHAPTER 14

The Fool In Proverbs

Kevin Beard

Introduction

THE BOOK OF *PROVERBS* is unique in the Bible in that it does not give a narration of historical events, like some books do, nor is it a continuous discourse to a specific group of people, as the New Testament epistles are. Instead, it is a collection of truths addressing many different subjects. Proverbs, by their nature, are intended to present general truth in short, easily remembered statements. Faussett defined a proverb as “a pithy sentence, concisely expressing some well-established truth susceptible of various illustrations and applications.”¹ Because of this, the book of Proverbs addresses a wide range of subjects, often passing from one subject to another in a very short space.

The nature of Proverbs is to give practical instruction for life, hence the variety of subjects addressed. The ability to make practical application of knowledge is at the very root of wisdom, which is the goal of the book. Wisdom, as described in Proverbs, encompasses more than knowledge. Though wisdom and knowledge go hand in hand, they are distinct qualities. A man may possess great knowledge yet lack wisdom. However, one cannot be truly wise without knowledge. Knowledge will lead to wisdom, but wisdom is the ability to understand and apply knowledge appropriately. Wiersbe noted:

Biblical wisdom has little if any relationship to a person's IQ or education, because it is a matter of moral and spiritual understanding. It has to do with character and values; it means looking at the world through the grid of God's truth.²

According to Buzzell, the word most often used for "wisdom" in the book of Proverbs also describes craftsmen, singers, sailors, etc., meaning that they were "skillful" because they were knowledgeable, experienced, and efficient in their fields. In the same way, he said, in spiritual things one who possesses wisdom "is one who is both knowledgeable and experienced in following God's way."³ Faussett said, "God has condescended to become our teacher on the practical affairs belonging to all the relations of life."⁴ Wisdom results from the pursuit, attaining, and application of God's instruction in life's practical lessons: "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6).

A good understanding of what wisdom is helps one to understand wisdom's antithesis: folly. The wise man learns, understands, and lives by the precepts of God's will. The fool rejects the will of God for something else. The book of Proverbs is part of the "Wisdom Literature" of the Bible. Fittingly, the words "wise" and "wisdom" occur a total of 125 times in it. However, the book not only describes and discusses wisdom; it also describes and discusses foolishness. Words like "fool," "foolish," and "folly" occur 97 times. It is just as wise to learn what a fool does as it is to learn what a wise man does. The truly wise man will desire to know both the way of wisdom, that he may follow it, and the way of folly, that he may avoid it. This study focuses on the fool in Proverbs so that those who read might avoid being like him, might avoid his path, and might interact with him appropriately, as God has directed.

Characteristics Of The Fool

Proverbs describes the fool in a number of ways. It addresses the things that make one a fool as well as some characteristics of those who are fools. These descriptions show that no one is a fool by birth, but he becomes a fool by the choices that he makes.

Fools Refuse Instruction

People are neither foolish nor wise by birth. They become what they are by the choices they make. Since instruction produces wisdom, one will become a fool without it. This condition may result from at least two different circumstances: either a man has no access to proper instruction, or he has no desire for proper instruction. The latter case is the one most sternly addressed in Proverbs. If one has no access to proper instruction, he may be pitied because his foolishness is not completely his fault, but when one has access to instruction and rejects it, he has no one but himself to blame for his folly.

Wisdom comes from God. James said, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (Jas. 1:5). Therefore, as the book of Proverbs opens, it declares, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). Fools are what they are because of the attitude they take toward the instruction that would make them wise. Instead of a godly fear of the Lord that produces respect for His Word, the fool despises the instruction and wisdom that God would give. The Lord has provided many areas of life from which one may acquire wisdom. The fool rejects them all.

"A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent" (Prov. 15:5). As with many

positive qualities, wisdom begins to grow in the home and, for some, so does foolishness. God designed the home so that parents might instruct their children in the things they need to learn (cf. Deut. 6:4-9). Sometimes the instruction parents give requires reproof, correction, and even punishment (cf. Heb. 12:9). A fool may begin to show himself in the home during these times of parental instruction and training. Notice that the passage indicates that the father tries to give instruction to his son, but the foolish son will not abide by it. In fact, the fool despises his father's instruction. This attitude is more than a mere hesitation or reluctance to pay attention to the instruction offered. According to Swanson, the word means, "**despise**, reject, spurn, i.e., feel contempt or strong dislike for an object, rejecting as having little or no value."⁵ The fool feels contempt for the father's instruction, and so he disregards it. This attitude often continues into later years.

"Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words" (Prov. 23:9). God offers the opportunity to gain wisdom through the instruction and advice of others. Many different people in a person's life can be a source of instruction to wisdom, if he will only listen to their advice. The fool refuses to recognize this. The advice given here is to the one who may seek to give advice. A wise man will recognize that a fool will not heed his instruction or advice, and will not waste his time trying to give it to the fool. This seems to be the same kind of instruction Jesus gave when He said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matt. 7:6).

This contemptuous attitude is to blame for the fool's being as he is. It is not that he is incapable of learning, but that his heart is not prepared to learn. Another proverb says, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to

get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?" (Prov. 17:16). Though a fool might try to buy wisdom, he will fail because his heart is not set to attain it. Thus, when he is exposed to instruction that would help him to be wise, he thinks nothing of the value of that instruction, preferring rather to extol his own virtues: "A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself" (Prov. 18:2). He would rather tell everyone else how great his own understanding is than to listen to the instruction of those who are truly wise. Other proverbs speak of the fool's attitude toward wisdom and instruction and how that attitude prevents the fool from acquiring the wisdom he desperately needs (Prov. 15:14; Prov. 17:24; Prov. 24:7).

Fools Seek Their Own Way

Fools reject instruction, whether it is from the Word of God or other sources. This in itself is foolish enough, but Proverbs shows that the fool goes even further in his folly; he rejects the ways of God to follow his own way:

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise (Prov. 12:15).

Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him (Prov. 26:12).

He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered (Prov. 28:26).

Why is it so foolish to follow one's own ways instead of the ways of God? Twice in Proverbs this answer is given: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12; Prov. 16:25). Only God's ways are right. In fact, man is not even capable of establishing his own system of right and wrong: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Israel

went through a period of continued trouble in the time of the judges because “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25). By following his own way, the fool travels the road of destruction. By his foolish choice of his own way, he comes to ruin and blames the Lord: “When a man’s folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord” (Prov. 19:3, ESV).⁶

This rejection of Divine wisdom for human ways leads to moral corruption. The fool in Proverbs demonstrates a greater desire for what is sinful than for the ways of righteousness: “It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom” (Prov. 10:23). Buzzell said, “A **fool**...enjoys sinning, whereas the wise prefer **wisdom**. This contrast between **evil conduct** and wisdom shows that wisdom in the biblical sense is moral in nature.”⁷ The word translated “mischief” suggests a sense of evil and moral degeneracy. Pfeiffer says of this word, “Elsewhere it is ‘wickedness,’ ‘lewdness,’ ‘crime.’”⁸ This wickedness does not bother the fool’s conscience; instead, he thinks that doing wrong is nothing but a joke. Another proverb says, “Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour” (Prov. 14:9). The fool’s own wicked way entices him so much that he will refuse to leave it: “it is abomination to fools to depart from evil” (Prov. 13:19).

This attitude opens the door for deception. Those who reject the true knowledge and understanding of God’s way allow themselves to be deceived: “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit” (Prov. 14:8). Paul described the same kind of situation:

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness
in them that perish; because they received not
the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:10-11).

People will believe something. If they reject the truth, the only thing left for them to believe is a lie. Paul did not mean that God would lie to the ones he mentioned, but that He would allow them to be deluded. God's Word demands that the hearer decide if he believes it or not. By rejecting it, the hearer invites the deception and delusion that will come as result of that rejection. Proverbs calls this kind of man a fool.

Reproof And Rebuke Are Useless With Fools

God cannot be blamed for the state of fools, and neither does He want them to continue in their folly. Just as with instruction, God offers men many avenues through which they can receive reproof and rebuke to correct their sinful ways. Wise men see the value of this correction and change those things that are amiss in their lives. But because of the choices fools make to reject God's ways for their own ways, they will not see any value in reproof and rebuke. Whether the correction comes through the words of Scripture, or through the agency of caring individuals, so long as the fool continues to be a fool, he will resist making any changes in his life.

"A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool" (Prov. 17:10). There is a great contrast between the wise man and the fool with regard to reproof. Since his ways are directed by the Lord, the wise man understands that reproof is necessary to righteousness when he strays from the right path. So one word of reproof is all that is needed for the wise man. However, the fool will not benefit from reproof, no matter how severe it may be. Even being beaten with a hundred stripes will not change the fool. Another proverb uses a

more figurative idea to express the same truth: “Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him” (Prov. 27:22). Hardship, punishment, and reproof all should convince a person to change when necessary, but none of these will cause the fool to alter his lifestyle.

“As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly” (Prov. 26:11). God wants His people to understand just how bad it is to be a fool who refuses to leave his folly. This proverb indicates that a fool may turn away from foolishness for a time, but that he will not make a permanent change. The disgusting thought of how a dog will return to eat what it has just vomited describes God’s view of those who refuse to make the permanent changes that they ought to make.

A Fool Is Known By His Lips

One characteristic of fools that proves to be especially detrimental to them is that their lips betray them: “Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly” (Prov. 13:16). The fool opens his mouth and reveals his foolishness because he truly believes he has important things to say. But because he has not heeded the instruction that would make him wise, he only exposes his lack of wisdom to all who hear him. Whereas the wise man discusses things according to his knowledge, the fool is quick to discuss those things about which he knows nothing. His interest lies not in discovering truth and understanding, but in revealing his own mind: “A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself” (Prov. 18:2). Since all of this is true, one would not expect to find the fool uttering excellent words. Solomon used this principle to admonish leaders to guard their words closely: “Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince” (Prov. 17:7).

Pride and foolishness often go together, and pride moves the fool to open his mouth when he should remain quiet:

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them (Prov. 14:3).

A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul (Prov. 18:6-7).

When fools open their mouths in pride, they often bring the rod of correction upon their backs; wise men know when to speak and when to remain quiet, so that their lips protect them from the punishment of the foolish. Who has not seen this truth demonstrated? So often it is the case that the ones who know the least about a matter will say the most. They want to be recognized as experts on the subject at hand, yet their foolish pride reveals them to be just the opposite. When one looks to call attention to himself for what he thinks he knows, he often calls attention to the fact that he knows nothing. It is better to remain quiet than to speak without knowledge: "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding" (Prov. 17:28).

Sometimes the foolishness associated with speech shows itself in being too quick to speak. It may not necessarily be the case that the one who speaks too soon lacks knowledge, but he does not show discretion in speaking:

A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul (Prov. 18:6-7).

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him (Prov. 18:13).

A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards (Prov. 29:11).

Fools Do Not Control Their Wrath

The fool's character flaws are many, and they all bring him trouble. One of these flaws is particularly singled out in Proverbs. Fools make no effort to control their wrath. It is not necessarily wrong to become angry. Paul said, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26). The wise man always strives to demonstrate self-control, but the fool allows his anger to go unchecked: "A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame" (Prov. 12:16). The difference between the wise man and the fool is in their attitude toward strife: "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling" (Prov. 20:3). Strife (contention, disputes, hostility) exacerbates problems between people. To cease from strife, one must seek resolution of the problem and reconciliation. Wise men see the honor in such a course, but fools prefer the strife. The word translated "meddling" means, "**be hostile**, be quick to dispute, i.e., be inclined to be hostile and opposing toward another."⁹ So the fool seeks out and promotes strife and conflict. He enjoys the thrill of the argument and would rather win the fight than come to a fair and equitable agreement.

This deficiency of control that the fool demonstrates can be attributed to various things. Proverbs 14:15-17 addresses the ways of the fool with regard to his rage and anger:

The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going. A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

First, the fool does not give due consideration to the things he hears, whereas the wise man pays close attention to these details. A man who is prone to believe everything he hears may also be prone to undue fits of anger because of those things he hears. Second, a wise man has respect for the ways of God and goes out of his way to avoid evil (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21-22), but the foolish man rages in his self-confidence. Convinced that he is right, the fool takes no thought to the consequences of his actions, and rushes headlong into fury. Delitzsch said:

the wise man has fear, viz. fear of God, or rather,...that careful, thoughtful, self-mistrusting reserve which flows from the reverential awe of God; the fool, on the contrary, can neither rule nor bridle his affections, and without any just occasion falls into passionate excitement.¹⁰

Third, the fool is “soon angry.” Some people pride themselves in their short tempers, but such a quality should make one ashamed. The fool allows every little thing to stir him to anger, and in so doing he is prone to evil ways.

Conduct Toward The Fool

The book of Proverbs goes to great lengths to describe the fool. One reason for this is to teach the wise man to avoid those things that causes one to be a fool. Another reason is to identify men as fools so that the wise may interact with them appropriately. As seen already, the actions of fools affect not only themselves, but also those around them. Because of this, the wise man will be on guard when he is in the company of a fool, and will be careful to conduct himself in a way that will lessen the influence of the fool’s actions on his own life.

One of the most fundamental principles in dealing with fools is to avoid them: “Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of

knowledge” (Prov. 14:7). One may not detect that a man is a fool at first glance, but the fool will reveal himself soon enough. When the wise man learns that he is in the presence of a fool, he will do well to avoid that man. This word of warning makes it clear: “Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly” (Prov. 17:12). Should the wise man find himself caught in some controversy with a fool, there will be no peaceful and reasonable resolution to the problem: “If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest” (Prov. 29:9). When one chooses to interact with a fool, he risks taking on the heavy burden of the fool’s wrath: “A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool’s wrath is heavier than them both” (Prov. 27:3).

Knowing the nature of fools, it is important to be careful about the people one trusts. Whether entrusting some important task to a companion or bestowing honor on another, the wise man will avoid the fool in both cases:

Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes (Prov. 19:10).

As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool (Prov. 26:1).

Proverbs 26:6-9 describes the danger of entrusting important messages to fools:

He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage. The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools. As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool. As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

If some important message is to be sent, or some important deed to be done, do not entrust it to a fool. To do so would be equal to cutting off the feet of the messenger. The fool

will not deliver the message properly. Like a lame man with legs that are useless, the fool who tries to apply some parable will stumble and fall. So, to honor a fool by entrusting him with such important tasks is dangerous. Tying a stone in a sling would be both useless and dangerous, for a sling is meant to throw a stone, not to have a stone tied in it. When attempting to sling the stone, the man wielding the sling may be injured by the improperly fixed stone. In the same way, one who honors a fool may be injured by the fool's actions. This injury may come as a result of the failed mission entrusted to the fool, or it may come to the reputation of the man who entrusted some important task to a fool.

Two proverbs address the responsibility one has in responding to a fool. On the surface, they seem to be contradictory: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit" (Prov. 26:4-5). The obvious answer to this puzzling statement is in the nature of the fool in the two cases under consideration. The first applies to a fool who has rejected all instruction. He has had opportunity to learn, but prefers his own way to the right way. Engaging in argument with him will only pull one down to the fool's level. It is better to avoid the discussion. The second applies to a fool who has not necessarily had opportunity to learn the right way. He believes he knows the truth on some matter, but is mistaken. To engage in discussion with this man may prevent him from becoming so set in his own belief that he becomes like the fool in the former case. A wise man will seek to ascertain the nature of the fool who confronts him and interact with him appropriately.

Consequences For The Fool

The wise advice of the Lord plainly points out that the fool has some undesirable consequences to face.

Because of this, it would be better to live in poverty and beg for food than to be a fool: “Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool” (Prov. 19:1). The consequences of being a fool are sure to come: “As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back” (Prov. 26:2-3). As birds reach their destination because of their wandering and flying, so the curse comes upon the fool for a reason. Whips are made for horses and bridles are made for donkeys in the same way that rods are intended for the backs of fools. Live the life of a fool and suffer the consequences. These consequences affect the fool himself:

He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow:
but a prating fool shall fall (Prov. 10:10).

Judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes
for the back of fools (Prov. 19:29).

This punishment for fools may come in this life. Foolishness, as described above, leads to conduct that is often anti-social. His punishment may come in the form of being shunned by those who follow the ways of wisdom. Because of this, the fool will not enjoy the closeness and camaraderie of good people. He will not have opportunity to advance and be honored, because he will not be entrusted with responsibility. He will be regarded as a man to be avoided. His consequences also may come in the form of more formal punishment. Foolishness often leads to criminal lifestyles. Since wisdom comes from God and the fool rejects wisdom, the only alternative is a lifestyle that is devoid of righteousness. Consequently, fools may find themselves suffering the punishment that evildoers deserve. But more significant than all of these is the spiritual consequence of being a fool. Those who

reject God's Word will be judged by God's Word: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Such consequences are inescapable, so long as the fool remains in his folly.

Sadly, the fool affects not only himself, but also his family: "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him" (Prov. 17:25). Parents agonize over the foolishness of their children. This is not the way God intended it to be. The psalmist said:

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Psm. 127:3-5).

But those words are true only for parents of children who respect their parents' instruction and the Word of the Lord. When a child rejects his parents' ways and follows his own course through life, he becomes a source of grief and bitterness to his father and mother. They cannot look with joy, thanksgiving, or appreciation on the life of their child, because he is a fool. Because of this, the fool cuts himself off from his own family: "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart" (Prov. 11:29). According to Buzzell:

To bring trouble on one's own family members means that such a person will be disinherited from the estate; he will receive only wind, or nothing. And rather than being wealthy and having servants, such a fool becomes a servant!¹¹

Conclusion

The book of Proverbs reveals God's instructions for life in a practical way. It is a book of wisdom, and wisdom is the practical application of knowledge. To reject wisdom

is to choose folly. Every wise man ought to study the ways of the fool so that he might recognize those things that take one from wisdom to folly. Knowing these things will make one seek the ways of wisdom revealed by the Lord. Seeing the danger of foolishness, he will be on guard when in the company of fools, and not allow the fool to influence him to turn from wisdom, because he understands that severe consequences await the fool.

Though the fool deservedly brings serious consequences upon himself, there is a glimmer of hope for him: God blesses all men with the things that sustain life, and, as long as there is life, there is hope. Even the fool can change. Patiently, lovingly, God grants time and opportunity for the fool to change because He does not desire that anyone should be lost (2 Pet. 3:9). He has provided the way of wisdom through His Word. Paul said that the Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). And so the offer of salvation is given to all (Tit. 2:11-12), and God will reward all who submit to His will.

Endnotes

1 A. R. Faussett, **A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, On The Old And New Testaments**, eds. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, & David Brown, Electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997).

2 Warren W. Wiersbe, **Be Skillful**, Electronic ed. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996).

3 Sid S. Buzzell, **The Bible Knowledge Commentary**, eds. John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, Electronic ed. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983).

4 Faussett.

5 James Swanson, **Dictionary Of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains**, Electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v., HGK5540.

6 **The Holy Bible**, English Standard Version, Electronic ed. (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2001).

7 Buzzell.

8 Charles F. Pfeiffer, **The Wycliffe Bible Commentary**, Electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962).

9 Swanson, s.v., H1556.

10 C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, "Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, And Song Of Solomon," **Commentary On The Old Testament**, Volume 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), p. 301.

11 Buzzell.



About The Author

Married to Jan (Richey), 3 sons. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching. Local preaching, AR, TN, AL. Mission trips to Russia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore. Gospel meetings in various states. Author of several chapters in lectureship books. Local work since 1999: Fayette church of Christ in Fayette, AL.

CHAPTER 15

The Wise Man In Proverbs

Wayne Jones

Appreciation

I*T IS A BLESSING* beyond description to be associated with the Southaven church of Christ. As my family and I have labored here for the past two years, our love and appreciation for this congregation of the Lord's people have grown day by day. With solid and sound elders, working deacons, and a committed membership, the future of the church at Southaven is very bright. We are humbled by the opportunity to be a part of this congregation of God's people.

I am thankful for the friendship of brother B.J. Clarke. He and his family mean so very much to me and my family. I appreciate the time we have to spend together and the example of dedication and energy he is to us all. He always chooses a splendid topic for discussion at the annual **POWER** Lectureship. This year's subject matter is no different. Personally, I have been anticipating this week for nearly a year. A lot of work has gone into making it possible, including many long hours and late nights by our capable lectureship director. I appreciate B. J. for all he does in the Lord's kingdom.

Introduction

One man built his house on the foundation of unstable and shifting sand. During the time of calm winds

and light rain, this house and its foundation were adequate. However, when the rains came and the mighty winds blew, the house (because of its poor foundation) fell (Matt. 7:26-27). Another man built his house on the foundation of a stable and secure rock. This house and its foundation were strong enough to withstand, no matter the fierceness of the storm or the heaviness of the rain. In all types of weather, this man's house stood firm (Matt. 7:24-25). The first man is described by Christ as being a fool, while the second man is called wise.

A group of ten virgins were waiting on the bridegroom. Five were **wise**, but five were **foolish** (Matt. 25:1-13). The five foolish virgins did not make adequate preparation in case there was a delay in the bridegroom's return. As a result, the door was shut, and they were left out in the proverbial cold. On the other hand, the five wise virgins planned ahead and were ready while the bridegroom tarried. The wisdom to prepare ensured their inclusion in the marriage.

In these two comparative discourses, Jesus divides all men into two categories: the **wise** and the **foolish**. Other designations could be given to these groups, and the same conclusions would be drawn. For example, in Psalm 1, all men are classified as either **righteous** or **wicked**. The righteous are those who meditate in God's Law and are stable according to Psalm 1:1-3 (much like the wise man who builds his house on the rock). The wicked are those who are driven by the wind and will eventually perish, according to Psalm 1:4-6 (much like the foolish man who builds his house on the sand). For another example, consider the judgment scene of Matthew 25:31-46. In these passages, all men are classified as either **blessed** (Matt. 25:34) or **cursed** (Matt. 25:41). The difference in these two groups is very similar to the difference between the wise and foolish virgins; one group used their time

leading up to judgment to prepare, but the other did not. Consequently, all men today are divided into two categories. If we are wise, then we will be righteous and spiritually blessed. However, if we are foolish, then we will be wicked and spiritually cursed.

Man's search for wisdom began all the way back in the Garden of Eden. When Eve partook of the restricted fruit, she did so because it was from a "tree to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6). The reason that men seek wisdom is because there are benefits associated with being wise. The benefits of being a wise man are noted in the writings of one of the wisest men who ever lived. Solomon noted that "a wise man is strong" (Prov. 24:5) and that a wise man can scale "the city of the mighty" and cast it down (Prov. 21:22). Solomon said even more about the wise man in his inspired writings, especially in the book of Proverbs. 66 times in 62 verses, Solomon used the word "wise" in this book. 54 times in 53 verses, he penned the word "wisdom" in this inspired writing. That is a total of 120 times in only 31 chapters that Solomon dealt specifically with those who are wise or with those who thought they were wise. The aim of this writing is to discuss from the book of Proverbs what it means to be a wise man. We will approach this study by looking at the wise man's fortune, features, and future.

Before we enter into our discussion of the wise man, as a foundation, let us consider that being wise involves two things. First, being wise is a **choice**. Solomon was wise because he chose to be. God presented Solomon with the equivalent to a blank check. God told Solomon, "Ask what I shall give thee" (2 Chron. 1:7). Consider the magnitude of this opportunity. The One granting this request would not be hindered in His giving. There would be no financial, material, or geographic restrictions that would have to be considered when Solomon made his

petition. No doubt, this opportunity would not have been handled the same way by most people. Most would have pursued financial, material, and even physical fulfillment from this once-in-a-lifetime chance. What then did Solomon want more than anything else? What did Solomon choose? He chose wisdom:

Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now **wisdom** and **knowledge**, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great? (2 Chron. 1:9-10, emp. mine throughout, WJ).

Some times the choice we make may not be wisdom over riches, but rather it may be the choice for heavenly wisdom over earthly wisdom. Those to whom James wrote faced this choice:

Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy (Jas. 3:13-17).

Despite Solomon's request for wisdom and despite God's granting that request, Solomon did not always show his wisdom. Why? Because being wise is not only a choice, but, second, it is a **chore**. A chore requires work. According to Proverbs 13:16, "Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge." The word "dealeth" is translated "worketh"

in the ASV. It has often been said that there is a distinct difference between knowledge and wisdom. A wise man not only has knowledge, but he works with that knowledge in the decisions that he makes. In fact, the wise man works diligently toward having knowledge in the first place. Again, Solomon stated, “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Prov. 14:15). Here, Solomon compares the one who believes everything he hears and the one who looks intently on what he hears and investigates it to see if it is true. The noble Bereans were considered wise (Acts 17:11) because they did not just take someone’s word for it: they explored for themselves. Such will be done by the wise man today. Truly, being a wise man involves making a choice and performing a chore.

With those two thoughts in mind, let us consider some aspects of a wise man, as described by Solomon. Many of the verses that we will be discussing will mention the “wise,” while others may mention the “prudent.” Just remember that “the wise in heart shall be called prudent” (Prov. 16:21).

The Wise Man’s Fortune

Many reach great wealth and riches because of their earthly or business wisdom. According to Solomon, “The crown of the wise is their riches” (Prov. 14:24). It is true. There are financial benefits of being knowledgeable and using wisdom in the business world. This fortune can be gained by the godly or the ungodly. Asaph saw the wicked prosper and their riches continue to increase (Psm. 73:12). Jeremiah’s generation questioned the financial successes of the wicked: “Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?” (Jer. 12:1). Although they may lack spiritual wisdom and understanding, many people are wise

in the ways of the world. It is this wisdom that promotes them to great worldly status (Prov. 11:29; Prov. 14:35) and produces for them great earthly treasure (Prov. 21:20).

This type of wisdom is not condemned in Scripture. In fact, Jesus indicated that God cares about my wisdom in financial affairs. Consider the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-11). This steward had wasted his master's goods and realized that his master would come to collect from him. While his master tarried, this steward began to approach those who owed his master. He would find out how much they owed and then he would reduce it. In doing so, he made friends of those in debt to his master. He did this so that, when his master dismissed him from service, he would still have a place to go. He made new friends through dishonesty and deceitfulness. However, his master (who had been defrauded by this man) commended him and even called him "wise" for having the foresight and craftiness to plan and carry out such a project (Luke 16:8).

The application is made in a later verse: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11). We must remember that all blessings, physical and spiritual, come from the Father of Lights (Jas. 1:17), and that we will be judged on how we used each of these blessings (1 Cor. 4:2). If God cannot trust us with the riches of this world that will perish, then why would we expect Him to trust us with the riches of eternity? Whether great or small, the crown of a true wise man is the way he uses his earthly riches.

Likewise, those who are spiritually wise will also have a crown: "The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge" (Prov. 14:18). Just as an earthly wise man will use his riches to produce more riches, so will a heavenly wise man use his knowledge to produce

more knowledge. Solomon writes, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning" (Prov. 9:9). A wise man will realize that he is never at a stopping point in spiritual growth. A wise man will ever seek the milk (1 Pet. 2:2) and meat (Heb. 5:12) of God's Word. There is a song in our song books entitled "I Love To Tell The Story." The last verse of this song opens with these words: "I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest." The wise man will polish his crown of knowledge with continual study and meditation. Near the close of his life, Paul wanted the opportunity to study the Scriptures by calling for the parchments (2 Tim. 4:13). Perhaps Solomon said it plainest: "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels...The wise in heart will receive commandments" (Prov. 1:5; Prov. 10:8).

Let us also consider that there is more to a crown of knowledge than just studying and reading God's Word. Wearing a crown of knowledge indicates living what we know to be truth. James forever linked the wise to faithful activity by asking and answering this inspired question: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (Jas. 3:13). Thus, the wise man will receive instruction, even if it is in the form of reproof:

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee..A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent...The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise (Prov. 9:8; Prov. 15:5; Prov. 15:31).

Furthermore, the wise will use that knowledge to their benefit. The wise man will take into account what he knows

about sin, death, and judgment whenever he makes a decision. Solomon makes reference to this on more than one occasion in the book of Proverbs. For example, “A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil” (Prov. 14:16). Further, consider Proverbs 27:12 and its teaching: “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.” These verses sound much like David’s Divine description of the blessed: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psm. 1:1).

The wise man understands, through his fortune or crown of knowledge, that God desires His children to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11) and that they “abstain from” every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). On the other hand, the fool does not use such knowledge. He too may know the verses listed above, but, for one reason or another, the fool chooses not to put that knowledge into action (Prov. 10:23). So the fool will fail and be destroyed, but “the law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 13:14).

The Wise Man’s Features

We can tell many things about a person by his features. For example, we can often tell what area of the country a person is from by the accent in his voice. The same is true when it comes to the wise man. We can determine who is wise and who is foolish by listening to and watching a man’s features—especially his lips, heart, and feet.

Consider the first of a wise man’s features—his lips. Oftentimes wisdom is found to be lacking because of things that a man says. For example, “a lying tongue” is listed among those things that God hates (Prov. 6:17). Solomon warned that some speak so harshly that their words cut like a sword (Prov. 12:18). Certainly, we have all heard

the “mouth of a fool” pour out foolishness (Prov. 15:2). The foolishness of speech can include gossip, cursing, swearing, lying, slander, and obscene jokes. The difference between the fool and the wise man can be heard when a man uses his tongue for evil.

Oftentimes the wise man is identified by saying nothing at all: “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards” (Prov. 29:11). Again this point is made when Solomon advised silence in some situations: “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him” (Prov. 26:4). Again Solomon wrote, “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (Prov. 10:19). Let us follow the example of our Lord, and, in needed situations, let us answer “not a word” (Matt. 15:23). True wisdom will know when to speak up and when to be quiet. Sometimes, even if a man is foolish in other areas of life, he is considered wise if he holds his tongue: “Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding” (Prov. 17:28). If a man is always answering and never “keeping it in,” chances are that man is foolish with his tongue. That is why James instructs us to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19).

Far too often, when we point out the difference between the foolish tongue and the wise tongue, we talk only about what we should not say. However, much is said in the book of Proverbs about how, if a man is wise, then he must use his speech for good. The lips of the wise man will spread knowledge (Prov. 15:2; Prov. 15:7), turn away wrath (Prov. 15:1; cf. Prov. 29:8), preserve life (Prov. 14:3), and convert souls (Prov. 11:30). Solomon pictured the words of a wise man in a very beautiful light:

The tongue of the just is as choice silver (Prov. 10:20).

A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it (Prov. 15:23).

Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones (Prov. 16:24).

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver (Prov. 25:11).

The wise will heed the inspired advice of Paul: “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6).

A second notable feature of a wise man is his heart:

The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge (Prov. 15:14).

Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding (Prov. 14:33).

In other words, the mind and thoughts of a wise man will be kept and guarded by his knowledge and understanding of God’s Word. On the other hand, the thoughts of the foolish are not (Prov. 24:9). There is a close connection between the lips of a wise man and the heart of a wise man. Solomon informed us that “the heart of the wise teacheth his mouth; and added understanding to his lips” (Prov. 16:23). Jesus interlocked our thoughts (hearts) and our speech (lips) while teaching His disciples:

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things (Matt. 12:34-35).

Since our words mirror our hearts, we need to keep our hearts pure. The wise man will daily seek to purify his

heart and guard his thoughts through the study and application of God's Word. The wise will give heed to Moses' instruction to set their hearts unto God's commandments (Deut. 32:46). The wise will pray, as did David, that God will apply their hearts to wisdom (Psm. 90:12). The wise will day by day cleanse their hands and purify their hearts (Jas. 4:8).

The third feature of a wise man that we want to discuss is his feet. Although the feet of a wise man are not specifically mentioned in the book of Proverbs, the direction in which they carry the wise man is detailed. For instance, Proverbs 15:21 states that "a man of understanding walketh uprightly." The phrase "man of understanding" is used throughout Proverbs to refer to the wise man (Prov. 1:5; Prov. 17:28). In what direction do the feet of the wise travel? They travel the way of the upright (cf. Job 1:1; Job 1:8; Job 2:3). Thus, you will be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish by the way they walk. The fool walks in darkness (Eccl. 2:14). However, the wise man walks in integrity (Prov. 20:7) and works righteousness (Psm. 15:2). Consequently, the wise walker will be confident (Prov. 10:9), delivered (Prov. 28:26), and saved (Prov. 28:18). Why does a wise man walk in this fashion? May we suggest it is because his "feet" are grounded in the fear of the Lord. The Scriptures say, "he that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD" (Prov. 14:2). Furthermore, the one who walks wisely will influence others to walk the same path (Prov. 13:20).

Truly, the wise man, as described by inspiration, will possess certain features. Do our lips, heart, and minds show our wisdom or foolishness?

The Wise Man's Future

Most people in this world are concerned about their physical future. Providing for our own and ensuring that our families are supplied with their future needs are godly principles that we should heed. However, many who are

interested in their physical future never take thought for their spiritual future. Those who are not concerned about their spiritual futures are noted as being fools. In the case of the foolish farmer, God said to him, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luke 12:20). Christ then concluded that such is the description of anyone who thinks more about his physical future than his spiritual future (Luke 12:21).

For the wise man, thoughts about the future are both encouraging and filled with hope. After all, the wise man will be “commended according to his wisdom” (Prov. 12:8). Also, a man that “handleth a matter wisely shall find good” (Prov. 16:20). There is no doubt that these verses have some earthly application. On many fronts, including various religious circles, the wise receive accolades for their wisdom. The wise movie director is commended with an Oscar. The wise song writer is commended with a Grammy. The wise student is commended with his name being on the Dean’s List. The wise Christian is commended by others who look at life correctly (Rom. 16:1). Even still, there is also (and more importantly) a heavenly application found in these verses. On the Day of Judgement, we will either be condemned or commended by the righteous Judge. To the wise man, that day will be a day of spiritual commendation. It will be greater than any earthly reward, accolade, honor, or distinction. After living a life separate from the world, that is accompanied by persecution and rejection from those who do not walk the way of the wise, we will be spiritually vindicated. Truly as we sing, “Heaven will surely be worthy it all. Worth all the sorrows that here befall. After this life with all its strife; Heaven will surely be worth it all.”

This commendation is not merely anticipation, but, rather, it is sure. How do we know? Because Solomon states that “the way of the life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath” (Prov. 15:24). The language of

Proverbs 15:24 is much like the language of Colossians 3:1-4:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

We are promised, by the One Who never fails, that, if we walk with Christ (i.e., walk the way of the wise man), then we will be in glory with Him one day. Solomon would express these thoughts by declaring that “the wise shall inherit glory” (Prov. 3:35).

It may be that many things about the future are uncertain. How long will we live? Will we still be alive at the return of Christ? Will we see our children grown, and will we enjoy time with our grandchildren? Will our country continue to be free, or will we lose that great blessing from God? Many other questions loom in our minds as we ponder the future. There is one question that we do not have to ponder if we are walking the way of the wise—where will we spend eternity? The wise will forever be in the company of God. That answer is certain, and that promise is sure!

Conclusion

If time and space would have permitted, we could have considered the family of the wise man (Prov. 10:1; Prov. 13:1; Prov. 15:20; Prov. 17:2; Prov. 17:10; Prov. 23:15; Prov. 23:24). Or we could have considered the wise man and his friends (Prov. 13:20; Prov. 16:20; Prov. 24:6). However, if we truly realize the fortune, features, and future of a wise man, we will be motivated to “get wisdom” (Prov. 4:5). If we truly realize the glorious commendation

that awaits the wise of heart, we will be diligent to “hear counsel, and receive instruction, that we may be wise in the latter end” (Prov. 19:20).



About The Author

Native of Tennessee. Married to Shana Kaye (Spacek), 2 children. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching. Local preaching: TN, AR, MS. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Past Director: Reelfoot Youth Camp. Counselor/teacher: Sardis Lake Christian Camp. Associate minister, Southaven, MS since 2001.

CHAPTER 16

The Wicked Man In Proverbs

David Jones

Introduction

ONCE AGAIN WE BOW before the great I Am and thank Him for the Southaven church of Christ. We are so thankful for the fellowship we have had over the years with such a fine body of people who have been called out of the world and into the light of God's grace. The infinite amount of influence this congregation has had over the years for good will only be totally known in heaven. We are thankful for her good elders and their wives. The stand taken here is exemplary for all other elderships. They have helped us time and again to carry the Gospel around the world. Those who stand week by week and proclaim the Gospel from her pulpit are men of strength and steadfastness in the faith. Their reputation is known far and wide as being sound and solid in the truth.

We are thankful to have once again the privilege to speak on the **POWER** Lectureship. The subjects in the past have been those which have benefited this writer personally in his study. They have been Bible-based and built on truth. This year is no exception to that. We have long believed that one of the richest, if not the richest, books in the Bible is the book of Proverbs. The wisdom of God literally leaps from the page, line by line. Its timeless principles and precepts extol the wisdom of God as they

exhort the readers to live above reproach. One of the greatest challenges which lie before the careful Bible student is to read the book of Proverbs, examining his own life, verse by verse. The individual who can measure his life by the Proverbs and find himself in God's grace is the one who is bound for the promised land. Its message is timeless and untiring. No matter the age, its words are still applicable to God's human creation.

Our assignment for this chapter is "The Wicked Man In Proverbs." Warnings from God are as essential for our consideration as are the promises of reward. In fact, one is foolish who does not hearken to the warnings which come from the pen of God. Our age and day are characterized by those who would have us concentrate and center our thoughts **only** on what they consider "positive" in nature. That is, we are bombarded through every avenue possible to never criticize or speak in a "judgmental" tone. Whatever anyone wishes to believe is to be honored as being right, and whatever anyone wishes to discard is to be allowed without any consequences.

However, this idea is totally foreign to the Word of God. When God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel, He said, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezek. 3:17). God demanded that His prophet warn His people of their sin. He goes on to say in the next few verses (Ezek. 3:18-21) that men must be warned of their sin. Neglecting to warn will cost us our own souls! Yet it is interesting that the majority today ridicules those who warn others according to the Word of God. Jeremiah reveals the reason why the majority will not desire to hear:

To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold,

the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach;
they have no delight in it (Jer. 6:10).

The masses do not have a delight in the Word of God today! Even in the New Testament, we are taught that people need to be warned: “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28). Paul said that, in preaching Christ, men have to be warned.

The God of heaven warned us in the book of Proverbs by showing us the demise of the wicked man. God loved mankind so much that He sent His own Son to die for us (John 3:16). He also loved us enough to warn us of the danger of rejecting His Word. The wicked are addressed in various passages throughout the book. We will explore these passages, exegete them where needed, and then emphasize the need to adhere to them in our lives today. The wicked man in Proverbs is depicted as one who rebels against God for his own selfish motives. His end is self-inflicted because of his refusal to adhere to God’s Word. The wicked man also destroys other people in his selfishness. He will be held accountable for these in the Day of Judgment. In warning us of the tactics and terminal end of the wicked man, God provides for us the material we need to avoid being like the wicked man. While the authority of the Old Testament does not apply to us today, we still learn by example (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

The Wicked Man And His Speech

The Bible contains all man needs for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Heaven’s wisdom saw it necessary to warn us repeatedly about the misuse and abuse of the tongue. The wise man revealed many passages in Proverbs which speak to the use of the tongue. We will center our thoughts on the wicked man and his speech. As we notice what Solomon had to say, we will also draw from the sum of God’s Word in application.

The Wicked Man And His Speech Sow Discord

The Bible records:

A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord (Prov. 6:12-14).

Solomon paints for us a despicable view of the wicked man in these three verses. Notice he is called a “naughty” person. This word, according to Strong’s, means “without profit, worthlessness; by extension destruction, wickedness (often in connection with H376, H802, H1121, etc.): - Belial, evil, naughty, ungodly (men), wicked.”¹ The naughty man is an unprofitable or worthless man before God because of the damage that he does to himself and his fellow men.

The wise man’s next reference to this man calls him a wicked man walking with a “froward” mouth. Gill says of this word, “speaking perverse things, things contrary to the light of nature and reason, to law and Gospel.”² The wicked man’s speech is perverse; it is against all for which God and godly people stand. It is crooked as opposed to straight. His words contradict and do not harmonize. The utterances which come from this type of mouth tear down and do not edify. Even his gestures “speak” as one who is trying to snare and trap victims rather than help and support his “hearers.” Albert Barnes says of these verses:

[L]iterally, “a man of Belial,” i.e., a worthless man (see the Deut. 13:13 note). This is the portrait of the man who is not to be trusted, whose look and gestures warn against him all who can observe. His speech is tortuous and crafty; his wink tells the accomplice that the victim is already snared; his gestures with foot and hand are half in deceit, and half in mockery.³

The end result of the wicked man’s speech is that discord is sown among brethren and men. The wise man

goes on in the context and reveals God's attitude toward those who sow discord:

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16-19).

God hates those who sow discord because of the damage it does to His creation. According to Strong's, the word "discord" means "a contest or quarrel:—brawling, contention (-ous), discord, strife. Comp. H4079, H4090."⁴ The wicked man fights or brawls against a unified Godhead and induces God's creation to fight rather than live in harmony. Paul shows the contrast between the carnal (wicked) and the spiritual in Romans: "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).

Notice that the wicked or carnal person brings about death to himself and to those who follow his ways. The spiritually minded person brings peace. Peace is the opposite of discord. Peace, as used here, refers also to the peace between man and God, but there can be no peace between the wicked man and God because the wicked sows discord and not unity or harmony. Again, Paul exhorts his readers to follow peace: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19). One cannot follow peace if he is sowing discord. One manifestation of bearing the fruit of the spirit is peace: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Gal. 5:22). The wicked man of Proverbs is not bearing the fruit of the Spirit in his life if he is sowing discord, which is the opposite of the peace he ought to be manifesting.

The Wicked Man And His Speech Separate Chief Friends

Heaven also records in the book of Proverbs:

An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire. A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends. A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass (Prov. 16:27-30).

A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue (Prov. 17:4).

An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity (Prov. 19:28).

These verses reveal the fact that the wicked man uses his tongue in his speech to separate friends. This can be done in several ways, as revealed by Solomon. He digs up evil on individuals. He would not stop from lying about someone just to hurt him. He can do this by slander, gossip, and back-biting. The wicked man delights in tearing someone's reputation to shreds by his mouth. His words lure and lead his neighbors into his evil ways with him. He helps break down the moral teachings that they may have planted in their hearts.

Many other references are made in Proverbs to the misuse of the tongue, but we will cite one which fits the context of the wicked man and his separation of chief friends: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (Prov. 18:21). Death resides in the power of the tongue. What type of death is under consideration? Obviously, literal murder would not be, just from common-sense reasoning. But the death of an individual's influence and reputation

could reside in the misuse and abuse of the tongue. The wicked man is one who delights in murdering people by evil talking. John records in the New Testament that hatred is murder: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). The wicked man would be one who does not love his brethren; thus, he would be a murderer. If the wicked man hated his brethren, then he would be one who would use his tongue to kill and murder his brethren behind their backs.

Notice also, Solomon said that those who love the use of the tongue will eat the fruit thereof. If an individual loved to gossip and slander, then he would reap the fruit of that type of activity. Jesus said:

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matt. 12:36-37).

We can correctly deduce from these verses that the wicked man is the man who speaks idle words which murder and kill. His murdering and killing with his tongue would truly separate chief friends.

Solomon also said that the wicked man not only did the speaking but he also listened to this type of speech, giving ear to a naughty tongue (Prov. 17:4). Therefore, he may not personally originate the lie or slander, but he listens to and repeats what he hears from someone else. The wicked man would be more receptive to this type of news than to the good news of brethren. He would rather hear bad news and gossip so he could spread it quickly. We have already noted Proverbs 16:27, where Solomon said that the ungodly man had these words in his mouth as a "burning fire." The wicked man would not confine this burning fire to his mouth only but would spread it as

rapidly and destructively as a burning fire. Jeremiah once used this analogy in reference to the Word of God:

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay (Jer. 20:9).

Jeremiah did not confine the Word of God to his mouth only but spread it because he could not contain it. We can safely conclude that the wicked man could not contain himself but would spread vicious lies, lies which originated in his own mind, and others which were translated from other people.

The consequences of his evil and wicked work could ruin good people. His helpless victims' families could suffer embarrassment from his wicked lies. These individuals' children could be subjected to undue criticism. Their emotional states could be affected. The wicked man's targets could lose their influence and maybe even their jobs. Suppose a wicked man began to spread lies and rumors about a good and sound preacher or elder. These men (preacher and/or elder) could possibly have to resign because their influence for good could be hindered or hampered by the burning fire spread by lies and gossip. The entire body of Christ in a location could be harmed simply by the efforts of wicked men who love to spread lies and separate chief friends. Chief friends could be eternally separated because the lies of the wicked were believed by one or both sides of the friendship. When these situations manifest themselves in local congregations and communities, Satan has achieved his goal of hindering the work of Christ.

Paul spoke of Satan's hindering in the first century: "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us" (1 Thess. 2:18).

Whatever the nature of that hindering was, one can be assured that Satan still tries to hinder the work, and one of his tools is the misuse and abuse of the wicked man's speech. These men or women will reap the consequences of such action if they do not repent in this life: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).

The Wicked Man And His Sphere

Solomon also has somewhat to say about the sphere or realm in which the wicked man operates: "The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit" (Prov. 12:12). Albert Barnes makes this comment about this verse:

The marginal rendering gives the thought that the wicked seek the protection of others like themselves, but seek in vain; the "root of the just" (i.e., that in them which is fixed and stable) alone yields that protection.⁵

The wicked seem to operate in the realm or sphere of wickedness, surrounded by the wicked and they of their own spirit and stripe. This is exactly what Paul had reference to when he wrote:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-2).

The wicked of his day walked according to the course of the world, and this is the same sphere in which the wicked operated in Solomon's day, and in our day as well.

One reason why they operate in this sphere is because the righteous are to withdraw from them: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). The wicked seek approval and protection from other wicked men because they think and act alike, being rejected by those who follow the light of God’s Word.

This sphere is also marked by hatred, and not love, for truth and those who stand for truth: “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:19). Jesus promised the apostles it would be so. Light and darkness are opposites, and so those who walk in darkness are opposite from those who walk in light. Jesus prayed for His followers because of this distinction: “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). The apostles are under consideration in this very verse of Scripture. Jesus knew that they would be hated because of the sphere of the wicked. Those who listen to the prince of the power of the air will not listen to the Prince of Peace. Thus, hatred would (and does) abide among the followers of darkness toward the followers of light. Jesus went on to pray for all who would follow His Word:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

Jesus prayed for all who would follow the light of the apostles’ doctrine and would thus oppose the sphere of the wicked.

The Wicked Man And His Sphere Are Marked By Rebellion

Solomon writes, “An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him” (Prov. 17:11). The wicked man loves to rebel against the Word of God. He delights in walking antagonistically toward all that is good. His life is characterized by rebellion to what the Word of God says, as he follows the one who rebelled against all that was good in heaven. Satan rebelled against the God of heaven and was cast down to earth:

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night (Rev. 12:10).

When the Bible student combines this verse with other verses of Scripture, he sees that a rebellion took place in heaven, and Satan was cast down to make war with all that is good:

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven (Luke 10:17-18).

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil (1 Tim. 3:6).

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen 3:15).

By examining these verses in this order, we see a clear reference in Luke’s record that Satan’s power and influence had been crushed or broken and that the disciples of the Lord would be empowered with the ability to have

authority or power over the forces of the wicked one. This was no doubt the intention of the Hebrews writer as he wrote about Jesus:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14-15).

The proof or confirmation of this deliverance would be manifested by the authority Jesus and His apostles would have over the forces of Satan.

The devil's sin was pride, and this is no doubt shown when he tempted Eve with the pride of life in the Garden of Eden as one of his three avenues of temptation (Gen. 3). The fact that he struck a blow to Jesus is seen in the fact that Jesus was killed by the hands of wicked men upon this earth: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). The proof of His victory came when Jesus rose from the dead: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

There has been a war between good and evil since Satan's rebellion in heaven and it continues unto this day. The wicked man and his sphere are marked by this rebellion which he follows as he follows darkness. Those who walk in this manner one day will be cast away with their leader into a lake of fire (Rev 20:14-15).

The Wicked Man And His Sphere Are Marked By Rejection

Not only does Solomon speak to the fact that the wicked man walks by rebellion, but he also walks by

rejection by calling good evil, thus rejecting the good: “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17:15). Wicked people seek to justify their actions, and the price they will pay is never too high. In justifying that which is evil, the wicked also condemn that which is righteous and good. Both justifying their own wicked deeds and condemning the good deeds of others are abomination before God. Isaiah pronounced a woe on these type of individuals, as well:

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! (Isa. 5:20-23).

Notice that there is harmony among those who walk in light and are guided by the Holy Spirit through His Words. Isaiah noted that the wicked justify themselves and take away from the righteous. These walk contrary to God, seeking persecution for those who walk in the light.

This sphere of rejection is marked by compromise of the truth, as well. Those who compromise the truth of the Gospel are those who justify actions and authority contrary to the authority of the Bible. These may fellowship denominations, being freely justified by themselves and their own standard of authority. They will join in community worship services freely in the name of the Lord. They will openly fellowship those even in the church who speak things contrary to the doctrine. Paul said that these ought to be marked and avoided, not marked and used:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

These who walk in the sphere of rejection also ridicule those who do stand in the old paths (Jer. 6:16). They mark us by such “loving terms” as legalists, narrow-minded bigots, unloving and judgmental brethren. As these go about justifying themselves by condemning those who stand for truth, they need to re-read Paul’s admonition to the Jews in Romans: “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things” (Rom. 2:1).

Truly the wicked man and his sphere are marked by rebellion and rejection of that which is good and godly.

The Wicked Man And His Sacrifice

The wise man reveals that the wicked man is not able in his wicked condition to sacrifice to God satisfactorily:

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness (Prov. 15:8-9).

That which is offered to God must be done with clean hands and pure hearts. This is marked clearly and concisely throughout the pages of God’s Word. Even from the beginning, God has made it an explicit point to show that sacrifice must be made and made according to God’s way.

Cain is the first recorded man who sinned in his sacrifice (Gen. 4). His sin was so difficult for him to bear that he killed his brother. John records for us that he killed Abel because of the wicked influence of Satan: “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:12). Notice that Cain’s works were evil. His works would definitely include his sacrifice, which was not offered according to faith. We know Abel’s was because the Hebrews writer tells that his sacrifice was accepted by God:

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh (Heb. 11:4).

Cain’s sacrifice was influenced by Satan, and Abel’s was by faith, which comes from the hearing of God’s Word (Rom. 10:17). So, from the beginning, God informed mankind of the importance of sacrifice with pure hearts and clean hands. The Bible includes accounts of many individuals whose sacrifices were not offered from one or the other and the punishment incurred by them at the hands of a displeased and dissatisfied God.

Solomon records for us that the wicked man who offers sacrifice but continues in his wickedness is offering an abomination before God. According to Peter, God will not hear the prayer of the unrighteous, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). God turns as it were His ear from the prayers of those who practice wickedness but yet continue to offer sacrifice. It does not matter if the sacrifice is literally correct; the attitude must also be correct. Jeremiah rebuked the Jews of his day for this very

thing: “To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me” (Jer. 6:20). Even though those Jews went to the trouble and expense of importing costly material to offer to God, their sacrifice was still not accepted because their hearts were not right.

The end of the wicked will be that of fear and not boldness or courage. Solomon writes, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). The wicked will not have confidence, and that can be partly true because their sacrifice is an abomination and not one which is accepted by God. The Hebrews writer speaks of the boldness the righteous can have as they approach the throne of God:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:15-16).

The righteous can be as bold as a lion because their hands are clean and their hearts pure. As a result, their sacrifices are accepted and respected by God. The wicked, though, will fear in the end because their hands are unclean and their hearts cold and calloused. Truly, the wicked man and his sacrifice are an abomination to God.

The Wicked Man And His Sentence

The wicked man has been highlighted and shown to be a person who is walking out of step with God and with heaven. This being the case, his sentence is sure and certain because of his rejection of and rebellion against God. Notice what Solomon says about his sentence:

Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy (Prov. 6:15).

Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked (Prov. 10:6).

The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment (Prov. 21:7).

Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them (Prov. 22:5).

The sentence of the wicked is determined and decreed by God. It shall be sudden and without hope of reversal. His end is compared to a way of thorns and thistles. In another place Solomon writes of his way, "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 13:15). However, the sentence of the wicked is not arbitrarily decided by God. The conduct of the wicked actually determines his end. Solomon is also inspired by the Holy Spirit to record the reasons why the wicked receives his sentence.

The Wicked Man's Sentence Is Self-Inflicted

Solomon writes that the wicked man inflicts his own sentence upon himself:

His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins (Prov. 5:22).

The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble (Prov. 12:13).

A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health (Prov. 13:17).

For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief (Prov. 24:16).

For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out (Prov. 24:20).

Notice that the wicked snares himself because of his lips and the use of his tongue. The wicked falls into his mischief, and his candle is put out because of his actions. The wicked choose to do what they do, and thus God has promised punishment if we refuse to obey His will.

Jesus spoke of this choice: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Jesus would be very unfair if a man did not have a choice to obey, but man does have the choice. The Hebrews writer even spoke of Jesus and His choice: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

Jesus had a choice, and He chose to obey God. Thus, He has the right and privilege of expecting man to obey if he, too, would be complete before God. When Peter spoke of God and His acceptance of people, he said to Cornelius:

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him (Acts 10:34-35).

Notice that, in every nation, all will be accepted by God who choose to fear Him and obey Him. The wicked man inflicts himself with his own sentence when he refuses.

The Wicked Man's Sentence Comes From Selfish Motives

The record says:

He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray (Prov. 5:23).

The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right (Prov. 21:8).

A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way (Prov. 21:29).

He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person (Prov. 24:8).

We notice in these final references to the wicked that his selfishness causes him to walk away from God. Ideas such as the “greatness of his folly” are expressed which show us his arrogance and audacity as he takes sinful pride in his own ways and the greatness of such. He hardens his face because he has decided to do what he does and will not be stopped. His selfish mind devises to do evil. The weeping prophet Jeremiah spoke to the Jews who were bent on going away from God and compared them to horses prepared for battle:

I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle (Jer. 8:6).

In fact, Jeremiah speaks of the wickedness of which they would not repent, saying they were rushing into their wickedness as horses ready for battle.

Paul spoke of greed and lust for money as the motive of all evil: “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10). The love of money—that is, selfishness—is the root or motive of all evil. This may be a fitting way to conclude the idea of the wicked man in Proverbs because at the root of all wickedness is selfishness. The one who tempts man to sin is Satan, and the motive of his work is selfishness. He wanted to be God and could not be content

with being subject to God. Those who follow his wicked paths are likewise selfish and bent on having things the way they want them to be, rather than as God has directed. So the wicked man brings about his own sentence due to his selfishness and his decision not to follow God.

Conclusion

The wicked man is discussed much by Solomon, even in terms other than the explicit “wicked man.” We have endeavored to notice the verses in the book which refer to the wicked in particular. The wicked man and his speech betray the God of heaven, his Creator. The wicked man and his sphere are marked by rebellion and rejection of all that is good. The wicked man and his sacrifice are both an abomination to God and will make the wicked man to be afraid in the end. The wicked man determines his own sentence due to selfish motives which makes his sentence self-inflicted. May we be diligent in our service to God and walk humbly before Him so we can be accepted of Him in the end. Micah said it like this, as we close: “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:8).

Endnotes

1 **Strong’s Hebrew And Greek Dictionaries**, E-Sword Version 6.5.0 (Rick Myers: <http://www.e-sword.net>, 2000-02).

2 John Gill, **Exposition Of The Entire Bible**, E-Sword Version 6.5.0 (Rick Myers: <http://www.e-sword.net>, 2000-02).

3 Albert Barnes, **Notes On The Bible**, E-Sword Version 6.5.0 (Rick Myers: <http://www.e-sword.net>, 2000-02).

4 **Strong’s Hebrew And Greek Dictionaries**.

5 Barnes.



About The Author

Married to Kathy (Williams), 2 children, 4 grandchildren. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching, Student: Northwest Community College, seeking secondary education degree. Local Preaching: MS, TN. Director/Editor: *Standing in the Gap* bulletin and lectureship. Part-time Instructor: Memphis School of Preaching. Director: 2nd session Sardis Lake Christian Camp. Mission Campaigns: 9 to Russia, and several state-side campaigns. Gospel meetings and Lectureships in various states. Local preacher, Nesbit church of Christ, Nesbit, MS since 1990.

CHAPTER 17

The Righteous Man In Proverbs

Steve Yeatts

Introduction

I *COUNT IT AS BOTH* an honor and a blessing to be with you for the 11th Annual **POWER** Lectureship. The theme is an intriguing one, and the topics will certainly provide hours of beneficial study for all of those inclined to glean spiritual growth from the pearls of wisdom contained in Proverbs.

The Righteous Man Defined

In the Old Testament, the word “righteous” appears 195 times and describes those who were just and lawful. In the New Testament, the word “righteous” appears 43 times and, in all but one instance, refers to the character and actions of a person being just, innocent, holy, and appropriate. In our present society, where proper understanding and application of Biblical terminology is often wanting in the vocabularies of most (even some who are Christians), and virtually nonexistent in the language of the world at-large, this study regarding “The Righteous Man in Proverbs” will hopefully benefit those who currently are Christians, as well as those who one day will obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most common reference in our age that uses the word “righteous” is when it is preceded by the

prefix “self.” For many in mainstream society, anyone who holds to (or even makes the claim to hold to) any standards of morality is labeled as self-righteous. The jackals of our postmodern society (those who are socially and religiously liberal) will often lie in wait, licking their chops impatiently, until they can exhume some skeleton of moral turpitude from the pasts of those with whom they ideologically disagree to show that even one who attempts to maintain moral comportment is, in fact, a hypocrite (i.e. self-righteous). Our study regarding the righteous man will use the objectivity of the Scriptures to show that a righteous man possesses numerous virtues that certainly do not place him on a pedestal of sinless perfection, but instead place him in the favor of the Lord based upon his consistently making wise choices because of his love and respect for God and His Word (Prov. 12:2).¹

In order to provide thorough coverage for the assignment as per this chapter, and to give at least tangential reference to all of the relevant verses, please consider with me the following main ideas with accompanying subtopics concerning the righteous man in Proverbs: (1) the providence of God in the life of the righteous man; (2) the promises of God in the life of the righteous man; and (3) the perspective of the righteous man.

The Providence Of God In The Life Of The Righteous Man

The righteous man, while not immune from the vicissitudes of life, will find himself blessed by the inherent advantages of his relationship to God. One of the prevailing themes regarding the status of the righteous is the providence of God that manifests itself in the receipt of necessary provisions and care on a daily basis. The providence of God is certainly a voluminous and very involved topic in and of itself, and it is not my intent (or

assignment) to explore it comprehensively, nor to oversimplify it. But for the scope of this segment of our study, let us operate with the understanding that the providence of God involves His Divine custody and supply for His own (Gen. 45:5-7; Gen. 50:20; et al.).

The writer David wrote in the Psalms, “I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Psm. 37:25; see also Prov. 13:25). The Proverbs writer indicates that **“The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish”** (Prov. 10:3, emp. mine throughout, SY). The New Testament writer James penned by inspiration that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” (Jas. 1:17). Indeed, none who are righteous could deny that the promise of our never being left or forsaken is a blessed reality for those who are saved (Heb. 13:5).

The Proverbs writer contrasts the calamity of the wicked man with the blessings of the righteous man in comparative couplings that appear throughout this book of wisdom. As it pertains to providence, we learn that those who are righteous value spiritual things, and those who are wicked will find no substantive eternal gain even if they have acquired material riches on this earth (Prov. 10:2). The focus of the righteous is not unbalanced. Righteous people are known to be industrious, honest, reliable, and of utmost integrity in their dealings with the church and with those in the world, but this is merely a complementary by-product of their primary focus on spiritual labors that dominate their lives and lead to eternal life [“life indeed,” as per the inspired writings of Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:19; cf. Prov. 10:16)]. The righteous man understands that the temporary nature of labors here on earth is an empty pursuit that never provides lasting fulfillment (Eccl. 2:4-11; Eccl. 5:10; et al.).

I have heard it said (and I believe appropriately so) that one cannot predict the providence of God and assert

on the front-end of some event that the providence of God is imminent or evident. However, one may look back when reviewing opportunities and choices and might with some appreciable level of personal conviction say that the providence of God was apparent (as Joseph did in Genesis 50:20).

“The desire of the righteous shall be granted,” penned Solomon (Prov. 10:24). This surety lends itself to the scope of providence as received by the righteous man. The ephemeral effect of the wicked is likened to the brevity of a whirlwind; however, the righteous have **“an everlasting foundation”** (Prov. 10:25). As I write this chapter, my home state (Tennessee) has recently endured wave after wave of violent storms, some of which spawned tornadoes. In fact, at least 16 people lost their lives as a direct result of these incredible storms, and many millions of dollars of personal property were destroyed. In checking up on many of my brothers and sisters in Christ from the congregation following these storms, most told of having sought shelter in bathtubs, hallways, closets, or basements during the intensity of the storms. The reason we seek shelter in such locations is our lack of confidence that a physical structure is a guarantee of protection in the face of such natural forces. Well, spiritually speaking, no worldly foundation is of any merit, either, concerning the only thing that really matters when this life is over—namely, being found in Christ, the chief cornerstone (Isa. 28:16; Matt. 16:18; Acts 4:11; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20). When our Saviour told the parable of the wise man and the foolish man, He spoke profoundly of the essentiality of our **“digging deep”** to establish a **spiritual** foundation which would weather the passing storms of life (Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49). Jesus is that Rock upon Whom the righteous are established, and in Him we are partakers of **“a kingdom which cannot be moved”** (Heb. 12:28).

As we continue to review the providential care granted by God to the righteous man, consider also the general principle of length of days based upon the comportment and favor of a righteous life (Prov. 10:27; Prov. 12:2). This principle of providence is not some type of ineluctable earthly guarantee about which we should become disillusioned and bitter when the righteous person suffers calamities or perhaps dies young, but is instead a function still of the forethought and supply of a loving God Who knows that we have need of the essentials of life, and generously provides them for us (Matt. 6:33). After all, for one who is righteous to pass on to paradise to await his reward is to fulfill the ultimate care of God from the temporary—“the life which now is”—to the eternal—“that which is to come” (Prov. 10:30; 1 Tim. 4:8).

The Potential (Hope) For The Righteous Man

The wise man Solomon wrote by inspiration, “When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth” (Prov. 11:7; see also Prov. 10:28). The obvious implication for a righteous man is that his hope is eternal: “We are saved by hope” (Rom. 8:24). We live in “hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1:2). The hope of the righteous person is “an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast” (Heb. 6:19). All of these wonderful and comforting truths stand in stark contrast to the emptiness of the temporal prospects of the wicked man who has not pursued things of an eternal nature, but has chosen poorly his course in life that will dictate his unending separation from his Creator. The Proverbs continue to reinforce the comfort of true hope: “**The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death**” (Prov. 14:32; see also Prov. 13:9).

Christians have hope, not as an “I-hope-so” kind of religion where one’s faith is tenuous, but a truly confident expectation that is sure and steadfast. The wicked deceive themselves throughout their lives, and, then in death, their loved ones will usually find a speaker for their funeral who attempts to preach them into the bosom of Abraham, but not so saith the Scriptures! The future of the righteous is built on the comfort and surety of spiritual hope! The wicked have no such hope because true hope for them died when they died.

The Problems Of The Righteous Man

One of the most faith-shaking episodes in a righteous man’s life is dealing with devastating occurrences. Whether it is loss of a family member, loss of property, loss of health, loss of a friend, loss of employment, etc., we all need the “all things work together for good” reminder from time to time (Rom. 8:28). How do we rectify the evil that occasionally happens to followers of Christ in light of “There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief” (Prov. 12:21)? We must not become so unbalanced and allow disturbing events in our lives to destroy our faith. It is not just periods of wealth and health that determine whether we are receiving the good favor of the Lord. In fact, times of economic and physical despair may be times that spiritually benefit us (Psm. 119:71). Yet sometimes, though we “have heard of the patience of Job,” we find it much more difficult to emulate his spiritual stamina and righteousness when we are the recipients of unfortunate events (Jas. 5:11; Job 1:22). The general concept is incontrovertible that those who perpetuate in evil actions (those who “have sown the wind”) will be the recipients of the harvest of the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7). Conversely, the righteous man is living a life that is predominated by wise choices, and he is truly able

to recognize that, whether life is going well or poorly by the world's standards here on earth, it shrinks in comparison with the life that is yet to come (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18). Therefore, the bad times (whether occasional or chronic) in the life of a righteous man are handled with the attitude of one who has his sights set on the eternal city, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10; Heb. 11:16).

The Prayers Of The Righteous Man

One of the most difficult things for an unsaved person to understand is that God hears only the prayers of the righteous (1 Pet. 3:12). Though many may consider themselves righteous already, they will learn quickly, even with nominal exposure to the truth, that they have not yet submitted to God's plan for salvation, and therefore, find themselves wanting in regard to the blessings of prayer. While it is certainly true in an accommodative sense that God hears and knows all [He did acknowledge the prayers of Cornelius as a "memorial" (Acts 10:2-4)], the righteous man rests in this:

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord: but the **prayer of the upright is his delight**. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness...The Lord is far from the wicked: **but he heareth the prayer of the righteous** (Prov. 15:8-9; Prov. 15:29).

We hope that those who are at least morally conscientious enough to consider prayer as an asset will not use that as their only religious effort, but will also study the Scriptures diligently, so that perhaps they will one day recognize their need to set aside their own version of righteousness by submitting to the righteousness that comes from God (Rom. 10:3). Prayer is not a privilege for

those outside of the fold, but is a privilege for the saved of God (Eph. 1:3). The idea of universalism has created the illusion that prayer is some sort of lifeline for all who offer an entreaty to God in spite of the belief system to which they adhere. The righteous man knows that his prayers are heard and answered according to the will of God (2 Cor. 12:7-9; Jas. 5:13; 1 John 5:14-15).

The Protection Provided For The Righteous Man

The wicked man is warned not to lie in wait against those who are righteous (Prov. 24:15). The righteous man possesses no clairvoyance that offers him protection; it is the protection of God that keeps him safe. The Proverbs let us know that, just as the actions of an unjust man are a disgrace to the righteous (just), the upright (righteous) is an abomination in the eyes of the wicked (Prov. 10:29; Prov. 14:11; Prov. 29:27).

The Promises Of God To The Righteous Man

The promises of God are soothing comforts to those who walk in the paths of righteousness and are harsh realities to those who shun the straight and narrow for their own devices (Rom. 11:22). The inspired writer of Proverbs pens that **“The righteous shall never be removed, but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth”** (Prov. 10:30). Those who follow God in a mode of faithfulness, dedication, and motivation will realize the blessedness of the promise of God through His Son that indeed we have a home prepared for us, “not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1; Heb. 3:4). No matter what assails us in this life, the righteous are those who stand in the face of adversity, persecution, and despair and say with Paul, **“But none of these things move me”** (Acts 20:24). When we are in the Lord’s army, there is no worldly army capable of moving us off our spiritual

moorings or deterring us from reaching our goal through Christ (Phil. 3:12-14; Phil. 4:13).

The Positive Influence Of The Righteous Man

We live in troubled times. Our society is manifesting the consequences of materialism, immorality, and decadence, indicative of a civilization on the decline and in jeopardy of ceasing to exist as we once knew it. Sometimes the righteous may question whether it is futile to persist in speaking out against evil, whether leading by example regarding those things that are good makes any impression or difference at all on those who surround us. The answer from Proverbs is definitive and heartening for us:

The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead...When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting. By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked (Prov. 11:8; Prov. 11:10-11).

Later in Proverbs, the inspired Solomon tells us that the state of righteousness in a nation exalts it (Prov. 14:34). In the aforementioned verses, we find that the favorable promises of God extend to others (the general populace) whose stock is elevated, as it were, in the eyes of God by the presence of the righteous.

The Production Of The Righteous Man

The Biblical principle of reaping what one sows is an indisputable spiritual maxim (Gal. 6:7-9; Jas. 3:18; et al.). While the wicked spend much of their time generating that which is empty and worthless, the righteous man is busy planting and watering the seeds of godliness in the lives of those with whom he comes

in contact (Prov. 11:18-19). Jesus spoke the profound parable of the sower, revealed in the tripartite accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8). The seed (the Word of God) is always good; the results are dependent upon the type of heart on which it lands. When the righteous encounter the honest and good hearts which are receptive, then fruit is yielded for the kingdom, “some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred” (Luke 8:15; Mark 4:20). The production of the righteous man, as per Proverbs, is that **“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise”** (Prov. 11:30). The inspired writer James spoke of spiritual fruit thus:

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and **good fruits**, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. **And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace** (Jas. 3:17-18).

The righteous man could never insinuate that God was somehow in his debt. The righteous man realizes that, even if much spiritual fruit resulted from his labors to God, it is God Who has given the increase every time, and that ultimately we have simply “done that which was our duty to do” (Prov. 11:31; Job 9:20; Luke 17:10; 1 Pet. 4:17-18).

The Possessions Of The Righteous Man

The righteous man understands that the world belongs to God, and all that is therein from a material standpoint would not be possible, but for God (Psm. 50:10-12). The smarmy televangelists pitch their poison on cable television promising material prosperity for all who will send cash, a good check, money order, or credit card pledge to support their “ministry.” The Jews of old considered material possessions as indicative of the blessings of God,

and many today are no different in their assessment of such. The Bible says **“In the house of the righteous is much treasure; but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble”** (Prov. 15:6). One who is consistently mindful and aware of the source of the blessings, whether great or small materially, is going to be a better steward of those possessions that he has and will glorify God in them (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

Our Saviour showed the folly of the rich farmer as one who had stored up “much goods for many years,” but had forgotten to invest any time and effort regarding the destiny of his soul, thereby being labeled a fool (Luke 12:19-21). Jesus said, just prior to the parable of the rich farmer, that **“a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth”** (Luke 12:15). Financial gain is not the goal of the righteous man, though for some it may come as a by-product of their dedication and service. Solomon (who “had it all” by worldly standards) summed up the conclusion of the matter by penning, “Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13).

The concept of the righteous man having much treasure needs to be measured equitably according to the Scriptures. Whether the righteous man has a little or a lot materially, he knows that, if he uses it wisely, he will be blessed. In a specifically spiritual sense, consider this: **“Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right”** (Prov. 16:8). The soul of the righteous man is content with what he has because his heart is set on the things that really matter—being rich toward God (Luke 12:21).²

The righteous man is a diligent planner, and his thoughts for the future of his children—financially, but more profoundly, spiritually—motivate him to leave a legacy even extending to his “children’s children” (Prov. 13:22). I have

seen a bumper sticker on the back of huge recreational vehicles that state something to the effect of, "We are spending our children's inheritance." Though that is certainly intended to be a tongue-in-cheek sort of reference, the righteous man is mindful of being a good steward of the things he has been blessed with by God, and he will store up a legacy for his progeny, first in a spiritual sense, and if he is able, also in a physical sense. The wicked man may leave a financial legacy to his descendants where the zeroes behind the first digit(s) of his estate go on and on, but, if he has not left his family a strong spiritual legacy, he has failed them most miserably.

The Pity Of The Righteous Man

In addition to having proper perspective concerning the receipt and stewardship of financial gain, the righteous man is a compassionate man. There are certainly some who are wealthy and well-known for their philanthropy, but I have read that often some of the people who fit into the category of social and moral liberals, who complain about the plight of the poor man, and blame the rich for the calamity of the poor, are themselves the **least** charitable of all. Our being charitable is not measured by our income, but by our taking the opportunities to give and to be considerate of those who are much less fortunate than we. This writer has traveled to many large cities in the United States and abroad, and I have seen some pitiful sights regarding those who are destitute and in need of assistance. One does not have to travel to large cities necessarily to find the indigent, ailing, and needy. One simply needs to take a look around his community, county, town, or city to observe that there are people who would benefit from aid. Often it is children, largely helpless against the ravages of poverty, who bear the brunt of the tragedy. I know that, in other parts of this book, proper

scriptural rebuke will be given to those who are too lazy to work, and therefore are poor, but, as for our consideration here, consider the following: **“The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it”** (Prov. 29:7).

It is not that the opportunities are different for the righteous man and the wicked man; it is simply that their hearts are different. Just as the rich man from Luke 16 could callously walk right by a diseased and starving Lazarus and offer no assistance, so also the apathetic in heart ignored the seriously injured traveler who was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 16:19-21; Luke 10:30-32). However, the righteous man (represented in Luke 10 by the certain Samaritan) is discerning, in that he observes, he recognizes, he cares, and he takes the time to **act** to help out those who are in need of his assistance.

The pity of the righteous man from Proverbs extends also from the human realm to care for his animals. My wife jokingly reminded me one time of how the **“righteous man regardeth the life of his beast”** when I took a swipe at our housecat for getting under my feet and nearly causing me to fall (Prov. 12:10). The Septuagint translates the word “regardeth” from this verse as “pitieth,” and that is the idea here.³ Somehow I do not believe that the housecat is what Solomon had in mind here, though the general principle is applicable, and I should develop a better attitude toward our housecat! The basic principle for this verse finds its source in the Law of Moses regarding how the ox should not be muzzled when it treads the corn (Deut. 25:4). In other words, the righteous man understands the blessings of God that are received even through the beasts of burden, and he will take the utmost care of those animals which aid him greatly in his labors and in his ability to provide sustenance for his family.

The Preference Of God For The Righteous Man

Let me assure the reader that, in my attempt for continued alliteration on these subtopics, I am not suggesting that God is a respecter of persons, as per a Calvinistic mode of picking and choosing personalities. God is no respecter of persons as it pertains to the Gospel decidedly being for **all who will obey the plan of salvation** (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; 1 Tim. 2:4). But, ostensibly, God does prefer the behavior of the righteous man to that of the wicked. Consider these axiomatic truths from Proverbs 12:

A good man obtaineth favour of the Lord: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn. A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved (Prov. 12:2-3).

The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand (Prov. 12:7).

The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble (Prov. 12:13).

In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death (Prov. 12:28).

The Pleasures Of The Righteous Man

We live in a very hedonistic society. Mankind has traded worship to God for the idols of recreation, entertainment, and the general pursuit of pleasure. It has been the pursuit of pleasure and the rejection of “old-fashioned encumbrances,” such as commitment to marriage and responsible parenthood brought to us by the social revolution of the 1960’s and 70’s, that has led to our postmodern and perverse society: **“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself”** (Prov. 14:14). The

backslider (he who turns away from God) shall reap the fruits of his evil doings, but the good (righteous) man finds fulfillment in the holy thoughts and righteous actions which are the essence of his character.⁴ Those holy thoughts and righteous actions are the true pleasures of life for the righteous man, not the pleasures enjoyed by the pursuit of sin that are very temporary, and eternally condemning (Heb. 11:25).

The Position Of The Righteous Man

The ultimate victory for the righteous man is the realization that in the end he will be rewarded and that the wicked people who experienced the fleeting prosperity that the world offers will be in submission to the standards set forth by God and observed by the righteous man (Prov. 14:19). The apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, asked the rhetorical question, “**Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?**” (1 Cor. 6:2). We know that each will be judged by the relevant law under which he lived, as per the Word of God. However, in a symbolic way, we know that the standard for judgment is decidedly inclusive of the traits of the righteous who, in essence, because they followed the Word of God, judge the wicked by the life that they (the righteous) led while here on earth.

The Path Of The Righteous Man

The Bible is fraught with examples and encouragements for us regarding those who followed the path that led to “life, righteousness, and honour” (Prov. 21:21). From Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Joseph, to Moses, to Joshua, to Samuel, to David, and onto Ezra and Nehemiah, we find in these faithful followers [and many others—“for the time would fail me”

(Heb. 11:32)] a dedication to the path of righteousness that we all may learn from until the Lord returns and we join them in heaven. For the righteous it is a pleasure and a privilege to live a life pleasing unto God, but for the sinful certain destruction awaits them as recompense for their deeds (Prov. 16:17; Prov. 21:8; Prov. 21:15; Prov. 21:18). The righteous man shuns the path of least resistance (acquiescence to the world) because he knows that such a path is choked with “thorns and snares” and will only lead to heartache (Prov. 22:5).

In Proverbs 4 we read, immediately subsequent to the section regarding the personification of wisdom (Prov. 4:8-13), that children are told to avoid, pass not by, to turn from and to pass away from “the path of the wicked” (Prov. 4:14-15). The wicked have deviant plans for the righteous and take great pleasure when the just stumble (called “schadenfreude”). In Proverbs 11:28-29, we learn that, even if the wicked are successful at leading the righteous astray, the end result will be that the wicked himself shall fall into the destruction that he set up with premeditation for another (Prov. 11:3; Prov. 11:5-6; Prov. 28:10; Prov. 29:6; Prov. 29:10).

This idea is further bolstered by the following: **“Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once”** (Prov. 28:18; see also Prov. 14:2). It is amazing that so many today have absorbed the tenet of Calvinism (perseverance of the saints) that is summed up as “once saved always saved.” One could not read the Scriptures (beginning with the Old Testament) with an honest and open heart for any substantive length of time and still cling blindly to the doctrine that asserts the impossibility of apostasy. The conditional nature of salvation is lost on the Calvinist and the Universalist as an unfathomable concept, though God has always set forth conditions that were requisite for His

people if they were to obtain deliverance, salvation, and blessing (Deut. 11:26-28; Deut. 30:11-19; Ezek. 3:17-21; et al.).

The Perspective Of The Righteous Man

One who is well aware that he is not guilty of breaking any laws does not have to slink around in paranoia waiting for the authorities finally to catch up to him. The Proverbs writer expresses that idea twofold:

**He that walketh uprightly walketh surely:
but he that perverteth his ways shall be
known** (Prov. 10:9).

**The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but
the righteous are bold as a lion** (Prov. 28:1).

Carrying around the burden of some hidden sin is a heavy load. Sometimes a perpetrator of criminal acts who has been on the run for months or even years will finally succumb to a guilty conscience and turn himself in. Indeed, as Moses stated, “be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). The righteous live in no such fear. The righteous man, through his integrity, will find success in his endeavors via the blessings of God. Conversely, the wicked man will rain down punishment upon himself when his deeds are discovered.⁵

The Plea Of The Righteous Man

The righteous man desires those things which are honorable and good, so, therefore, he directs his time, energy, thoughts, and attention toward such things (Prov. 11:23; Prov. 12:5; Prov. 12:12). Additionally, his daily petition and desire are for the truth because he hates lying (Prov. 13:5). In fact, the daily deportment of the righteous man is a consistent public plea for others to join him on the journey that leads to eternal life (Prov. 13:6). The fact

that many will fail to do so is a reflection of their own priorities that conflict with the wonderful example of the righteous man.

The wicked man is personified as one whose countenance portrays the recalcitrance of his heart. However, the righteous has the focus of his life pointed in the proper direction and desires, through the display of his tender heart, to lead the wicked into the way of life (Prov. 21:29). The righteous man will not count it as a joy when the inevitable fall of the wicked occurs. The righteous will rejoice at the justice of God, but not at the catastrophe of the fallen (Prov. 29:16). This stands in stark contrast to the joy of the wicked when the righteous stumble.

The Prudential Behavior Of The Righteous Man

One of the most difficult things for us to control is our tongue. We are exhorted to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19). The righteous man from Proverbs is counted as one who “**studieth to answer,**” as opposed to the sudden spate of swill that spews forth from the mouth of the wicked (Prov. 15:28). The righteous man exercises sound judgment and is careful to meditate and to apply the Scriptures before he speaks (1 Tim. 4:13; 1 Pet. 3:15; et al.).

The righteous man is so thoughtful and judicious that he actually spends time considering how he may reach the evil in order to save them from the wickedness of their way (Prov. 21:12).

When a wicked person is touted as righteous, this is an abomination unto God. The prophet Isaiah wrote of people who called evil good and good evil and pronounced a woe upon them (Isa. 5:20). In our day and time, we see perverse entertainers, politicians, criminals, terrorists, and shady characters pardoned for their outrageous behavior and often promoted as role models for the rest of us. The

Proverbs condemn that type of deceit as that which should be universally spoken against by the people (Prov. 24:24-25). In our country today we need more righteous people to be vocal and visible to decry the identification of evil as good and the labeling of the unrighteous as those who are righteous. Let us walk worthy of our calling and be the salt of the earth that we are (Eph. 4:1; Matt. 5:13ff). This will require the righteous being active spiritual voices for that which is holy, just, and right.

Those who ignore law are those who transmogrify the righteous man into that which is evil and who elevate the wicked to the status of the revered. The righteous do not sit idly by while this occurs; they “contend with them” who would forsake the law and expose them for the moral frauds that they are (Prov. 28:4-5). If the righteous capitulate to the wicked and fail to stand up for those things that are spiritual, moral and proper, then they are compared to contaminated water: **“A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring”** (Prov. 25:26). The prudential behavior of the righteous will not allow him to become complacent by avoiding the necessary battles against evil, even in the face of frustration or exhaustion. The righteous man will not deny his calling in the face of the wicked because to do so will result in the same denial within the portals of heaven (Matt. 10:32-33).

The Persistence Of The Righteous Man

The righteous man leads a life that, while not immune from the difficulties of life, is marked by his determination to continue to trust fully in God and to press on towards his goal (cf., Phil. 3:14). A verse that really shows the sense of this persistence is Proverbs 24:16: **“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:**

but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” Far too many began the journey of righteousness, but, upon being knocked down a time or two, eventually stayed down and allowed their faith to expire, and can no longer be found among the faithful of God. All throughout the Scriptures it is impressed upon the people of God to endure, to persist, to continue, to keep one’s hand to the plow, to be faithful unto death, and ultimately to overcome (Matt. 10:22; 1 Tim. 4:16; Luke 9:62; Heb. 3:12-19; Rev. 2:10; Rev. 3:5). The righteous man is not measured by how many times he was knocked for a loop, but by how many times he stood back up by the grace and strength of God and continued to fight as a soldier on the battlefield (Eph. 6:10-17).

Truly one sign of persistence in the life of the righteous is the essence of the last verse we will review on this subject: **“The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness”** (Prov. 16:31). For one to be blessed with many years is an honor from God and a pleasure for the family who enjoys their presence and company here on earth (Psm. 90:10). Surely all of us can think of those in our lives who lived, 80, 90, perhaps 100 years or more, were faithful to God to the very end, and continued to set a good example for all of us, even as they struggled with the ravages of the years on their physical body. No matter our age, there is nowhere else we want to be found on the day of reckoning than in the way of righteousness.

Conclusion

The study of the righteous man offers us so many insights that encourage us and challenge us in our Christian lives. To be righteous is to prefer the precepts of God over the concepts of man. To be righteous is to pray fervently, study diligently, live contentedly, reach out consistently, and set a good example so that others will ultimately follow on the path of righteousness also.

Endnotes

1 The King James Version of the Bible is used unless otherwise indicated.

2 H.D.M. Spence & Joseph S. Exell, "Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon," **The Pulpit Commentary**, Volume 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans), p. 291.

3 Ibid, p. 235.

4 Ibid, p. 271.

5 Ibid, p. 215.



About The Author

Native of Virginia. Married to Brenda (Curless), 3 children. Graduate: Middle Tennessee State University (M. Ed.); Freed Hardeman University (B. A.). Director and Editor of greater Murfreesboro Area Lectureship. Co-author: *Preaching the Whole Counsel of God*. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states annually. Local preaching: TN, KY, GA, MS, IL, OH, and VT. Local Preacher since 1997, Bethlehem church of Christ, Murfreesboro, TN.

CHAPTER 18

The Immoral Woman In Proverbs

Allen Webster

Introduction

ONE OUT OF EVERY twelve verses¹ in the book of Proverbs is devoted to warning men about the wrong kind of women. The wise man's cautions are no less appropriate three thousand years later than they were in 975 B.C. Albert Barnes calls adultery, "The besetting sin of all times and countries... Fornication was classed by the scholastic divines among the seven deadly sins."² Another commentator ventured, "All the other evils of society are insignificant compared with the perdition created by illicit intercourse...The Christian teacher should not be silent. Our young men are being destroyed by thousands."³ Job called it a heinous⁴ crime (Job 31:11). Jamieson points out, "There is something about adultery that is different from any other sin that man can commit."

Why Avoid Loose Women?

This question is laughable to the average single male. **Avoid her? I just want to find her!** In locker rooms, they talk about which girls to "take out" based on which ones "put out." They carefully script dates with one goal in mind—ending it in immoral acts. They go through adolescence keeping score of their conquests.

In college, if a couple dates three times without going “all the way,” they run the risk of being labeled “closet gays.”

Solomon has good reasons to date “good girls” and leave the bad ones at home. A key idea for Solomon is: “For surely there is an end” (Prov. 23:18; cf. Prov. 14:12; Prov. 16:25; Prov. 20:21; Prov. 25:8). He wants his son to focus on the “end” of fornication and adultery (Prov. 5:4).⁵ What are the consequences of giving in to her seduction? The evil results fall into three divisions: loss of honor, loss of wealth, and loss of health. Looked at another way, promiscuous sex destroys socially, financially, morally, physically, and spiritually. It is a sin against society, against one’s family, against one’s own body, against the church, and against God Himself.

Why Solomon Says To Watch Out For A Loose Woman

She’ll ruin your reputation and make you look like a fool: “Lest thou give thine honour unto others...the greatness of his folly...whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding” (Prov. 5:9; Prov. 5:23; Prov. 6:32). The young man whom Solomon spoke to might not have yet realized it, but most of us have lived long enough to realize the inestimable value of a good name. Solomon said, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” (Prov. 22:1). He likely wrote that before his name had been smeared by idolatry (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-4), but he made a similar statement after that regrettable mistake. Near the end of his life, he confirmed, “A good name is better than precious ointment” (Eccl. 7:1). There is no faster way to lose the good reputation (name) you worked years to attain than to fall into sexual sin. Even non-Christians recognize that this is not an act which honorable men do.

The infamy of sex sin can be indelible: “dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped⁶ away” (Prov. 6:33). Christ’s blood can cover it (1 John 1:7), but

its scandal may not so easily be erased. Solomon is telling his son—a future political leader—and others who would read this book that the reproach may not cease just because the sin ceases. An adulterer puts into the hand of each of his neighbors a stone to throw at him, for “they will all, with good reason, cry shame on thee.”⁷ David’s sin with Bathsheba was not only a perpetual blemish upon his name, but gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme God’s name. True Christians forgive and put it from their minds (Eph. 4:32; cf. Heb. 8:12), but non-Christians may not.

The wise man figured sexual sin to be much more scandalous even than stealing (Prov. 6:30-33). The thief (in Solomon’s illustration) sins to take care of his want, the adulterer to satisfy his wantonness. The thief steals to “satisfy his soul”; the adulterer “destroys his own soul.” God accounted adultery the more enormous crime, too, in giving it the strictest punishment under Moses’ Law—death. If one was caught stealing, he had to make sevenfold restitution;⁸ the greatest punishment he might face would be to have to give “all the substance of his house” (Prov. 6:31) to come up with that amount. His blood would not be required. By contrast, adultery was a capital crime:

And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death (Lev. 20:10; cf. Deut. 22:22).

An adulterer was taken from the camp (later known as towns) of Israel to be stoned and buried to “put away sin” from among God’s people. Modern America looks at this differently, of course. A thief is hated, and an adulterer is loved; the former is a criminal, and the latter is a “regular guy.” But calling “evil” “good” does not change its true character (cf. Isa. 5:11). Instead, it only makes the tolerant guilty, too (Rom. 1:32).

Adultery is an offense to reason. An adulterer often does not realize how foolish he/she appears to others. According to Harley and Chambers:

Once an affair is exposed to the realities of life, the protective bubble usually breaks and the passion fades away. Without passion, the stupidity of an affair becomes painfully apparent to everyone involved...Most affairs last less than six months after they are exposed to the light of day. A very few may survive two years of sunlight but that is rare, especially when a betrayed spouse lets go and gives the affair a chance to destroy itself.⁹

Many have lived to wish they never had seen the one they didn't think they could live without. When they became the joke around the break room, when conversations stopped as they entered a room, when their wife and children have cried until their swollen eyes have no more tears, when old "friends" don't come around any more, then adultery doesn't seem like such a good idea. In the long run, honor is worth more than pleasure.

She'll get you addicted to a sin from which one rarely returns:

None¹⁰ that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life...His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins...He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray (Prov. 2:19; Prov. 5:22-23).

Solomon pictured the adulteress with "hands as bands" and warned that "the sinner shall be taken¹¹ by her" (Eccl. 7:26). Authorities say that one use of certain drugs makes "instant addicts." Fornication is like that. It is seldom a one-time matter. Occasionally, a young couple will "slip up," repent, and then stay pure until marriage, but usually

the first time leads to frequent immorality—if not together, then with future boy/girlfriends. The same holds true for adultery. “While a one-night stand can be an isolated mistake in an otherwise affair-free marriage, it is more often a habit that is repeated by a wayward spouse, sometimes hundreds of times.”¹²

As Solomon pointed out, it usually gets one involved for “years” (Prov. 5:9b). It is a happy but seldom event that they recover a normal family life. It is a deep pit (Prov. 22:14), not a little bump in the road. It so defiles the mind, debauches the conscience, and pleases the flesh that it is hard to give up. Sin is deceitful and hardens the conscience (Heb. 3:13)—and perhaps none more than fornication. One respected commentator said, “It is as difficult to bring back a libidinous person to chastity as a dead man to life.” Hosea said, “Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart” (Hos. 4:11). Even in old age, when one may no longer act on his passion, he may still not repent of it, but take joy in remembering lustful encounters from his youth (cf. Ezek. 23:19).

The adulterer is held in the cords of his own sins (Prov. 5:22). This brings to mind **Gulliver’s Travels** and the thousands of tiny threads the Lilliputians and Blefuscudians used to secure him to the ground. One thread is easily broken, several are no challenge, but add enough of them together and they might as well be chains. Give sinners time for habits to form, and they need no prison or chains; their sins hold them fast:

Most people who follow unlawful pleasures think they can give them up whenever they please, but sin repeated becomes customary, custom soon engenders habit, and habit in the end assumes the form of necessity; the man becomes bound with his own cords and so is led captive by the devil at his will.¹³

In their book, *Surviving An Affair*, Harley and Chambers observe:

An affair is a very powerful addiction. The craving to be with the lover can be so intense that objective reality doesn't have much of a chance. The fact that a spouse and children may be permanently injured by this cruel indulgence doesn't seem to matter. Even the one-night stand may be an addiction. It may not be an addiction to a particular lover, but it may still be an addiction—to one-night stands. In affairs that have low emotional attachment, the addiction is often to the act of having sex itself, rather than to a particular lover. The addiction to one-night stands can also grow from a need to be continually assured of one's attractiveness. People who indulge in such practices want to feel that they can have anyone they want, even that person over there sitting at the bar. These people who need constant reassurance of their attractiveness must learn some other way to gain that assurance—a way that does not destroy their marriage.¹⁴

She'll rob your body of its health and give you an early funeral: "And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh¹⁵ and thy body are consumed...a wound...shall he get" (Prov. 5:11; Prov. 6:33). The picture is of a man who is worn out by dissolute living. The lusts of uncleanness not only war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11), but are hard on the body. "Mourn" literally means "to groan."¹⁶

The word "consumed" implies the threat of venereal diseases. God put immorality in a minefield of social diseases (e.g., AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhea, lymphogranuloma). It is not just men who use prostitutes who get sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). With about one sexually active American out of every four being a "carrier," and the average person having ten or more sexual partners, the odds are against any adulterer. The woman who abandons herself to multiple "sex for pay" or "sex for play"

partners soon contracts, and usually communicates, that disease which “signs the speediest passport to the invisible world.” Sinful sexual relations literally bring death to thousands each year. These are serious diseases—often incurable— such as syphilis and AIDS. Coffman writes of a young man he knew as a boy who was the strongest youth in the community. He could

tear a deck of cards in two, chin himself with either hand, and perform other amazing things; but he went to work in the oil fields, indulged his lust with prostitutes, contracted syphilis, and returned in a wheel-chair (locomotor ataxia), and to an untimely death.

The embarrassment and life-altering consequences of contracting a STD are strong deterrents to sleeping around. How many about to commit adultery ask, “Oh, by the way, you don’t have a sexually transmitted disease, do you?!” And, if they did, how many would get a truthful answer? The “safe sex” approach (despite media hype) is far from foolproof.¹⁷ James Dobson, on the Focus on the Family Website, gives the following information regarding “safe sex”:

Research indicates that where disease prevention is concerned, the failure rate of condoms is incredibly high, perhaps 50 percent or greater.⁶⁶ Condoms also fail to protect against some STDs that are transmitted from areas not covered (the base of the male genitalia, for example). After twenty-five years of teaching safe-sex ideology, and more than 2 billion federal dollars invested in selling this notion, we have a medical disaster on our hands. More than 500,000 cases of herpes occur annually,⁶⁷ and the number of reported cases of chlamydia has risen 281 percent since 1987. Forty-six percent of chlamydia cases occur in teenage girls ages fifteen to nineteen.⁶⁸ In addition, there are now over 24 million cases of HPV (human papilloma virus) in the United States, with a higher

prevalence among teens.⁶⁹ Having acknowledged these problems, why in the world would I recommend this so-called solution to my son or daughter? Look at it this way. Suppose my kids were sky divers whose parachutes had been demonstrated to fail 50 percent of the time. Would I suggest that they simply buckle the chutes tighter? Certainly not. I would say, “Please don’t jump. Your life is at stake!” How could I, as a loving father, do less?

I should add that, despite the popular myth to the contrary, teens **can** understand, accept, and implement the abstinence message. It’s not true that young people are sexual robots, hopelessly incapable of controlling their own behavior. As a matter of fact, almost 50 percent of all high school students are virgins today,⁷⁰ even though hardly anybody has told them it is a good thing. These kids desperately need to be affirmed in their decision and held up as positive examples for others. None of this will be accomplished by pushing condoms.

But there is another reason for talking to teens about abstinence rather than “safe sex.” It is even more important than the life-and-death issue cited above. I’m referring, of course, to the Creator’s design, God’s expressed will for human sexuality. “Protected promiscuity” has no part in that plan. Sex within the context for which it was intended—lifelong, monogamous marriage — is **always** safe. **This** is the message our kids need to hear from the earliest days of childhood! Anything less is worse than third-rate!¹⁸

The safe sex message hasn’t caught on with teens, anyway. Of sexually active teenagers, 57 percent never use contraceptives. Adults who are in a position to know also haven’t bought into the lie of safe sex—with good reason. At a recent conference, sexologists were asked to raise their hand if they would trust a condom to protect them during intercourse with a person known to be HIV-positive. Not one in eight hundred raised a hand. If eight hundred advocates of safe sex unanimously agree that it is not always safe, then why call it “safe”?

“Wounds” (Prov. 6:33) may refer to those inflicted by the enraged husband (Prov. 6:34), boyfriend, brother, or father, or they may refer to the wounds received from stoning. The verse also indicates that he is in for a “beating,” for he goes after her “as one in fetters to the correction of the fool” (Prov. 7:22).

She will rob your mind of its peace (Prov. 5:4-5; Prov. 5:9; Prov. 6:33). What is sweet pleasure at the start is “bitter as wormwood”¹⁹ at the end. A luscious mouthful is a sour bellyful. They who choose to fornicate “mourn at the last” (Prov. 5:4; Prov. 5:9). Adultery cuts like prison-fence wire; pick it up from any angle, and it will still wound you. Solomon found “more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets” (Eccl. 7:26). One should not discount the overwhelming power of regular guilt.

Fornication brings guilt. This is an ignored factor in much of the discussion about sex education. According to Jim Dethmer, the problem with sex ed being taught in schools is not that children are told **too much**: “The problem is they are being told **too little**. Sex is reduced to just a physical act.” Children are taught the biological aspects of sex without the corresponding spiritual and emotional ramifications. No wonder sex is taken so lightly. To most students it’s nothing more than a physical transaction.²⁰

Take teen girls as a sample case. The Heritage Foundation released a study which claims that “sexually active teens, particularly girls, are far more likely to be depressed or attempt suicide than their virginal friends.” Its analysis of thousands of sexually active girls ages 14-17 found that a full 25% said they felt depressed a lot or all of the time in the past week, compared with 7.7% of virgins. More than 14% of sexually active girls had attempted suicide in the previous year, compared with 5.1% of non-active peers. A National Campaign to Prevent Teen

Pregnancy survey found that nearly three-quarters of sexually active teen girls wished that they had waited longer.²¹

Adultery brings guilt. Once an affair comes out, often “the only emotion left is depression of the worst kind.”²² While “occasionally a scorned lover will go berserk, call all hours of the day and night, file lawsuits, and create all kinds of trouble,”²³ more often adulterers simply have to deal with a heavy dose of guilt.

We’ve all used the saw, “If you play with fire, you’ll get burned.” The Bible describes adultery as **fire** (Job 31:12), and says that it will “burn you” (Prov. 6:27-28). It is in fire’s nature to **inflict pain** and to **destroy** (Prov. 7:26). How many husbands and wives have been badly burned emotionally by adultery? Guilt takes its toll: The personality gradually warps from cheerful to morose; deep worry lines etch the face; ulcers form in the stomach; heart attacks and strokes lurk in the shadows. How many cheaters live in constant fear that they will let something slip or that they and their spouse will accidentally bump into the lover at some restaurant? How many cringe to think of what their children or godly parents will think of them if this “ever comes out”? As their wives sleep peaceably beside them, how many men have lain awake considering suicide?

She’ll destroy your soul (spiritual desires) (Prov. 6:32). Adultery is a sin that tends to kill the soul, and to extinguish all its good affections and dispositions. Two interpretations have been given of the phrase, “in all evil in the midst of congregation and assembly” (Prov. 5:14). Some see the adulterer’s hidden guilt besetting him as he pretended to be righteous in worship services. When he came to the temple or synagogue, he did not think of repenting; no, even there his unclean heart was full of lustful thoughts, and his eyes were full of adultery (2 Pet. 2:14).

The **habit** of sin—formed by frequent acts—was so rooted that his heart was fully set in him to commit it (cf. Eccl. 8:11). Heart-adultery (Matt. 5:28) is as open to God as physical adultery and as offensive, especially if committed as one draws hypocritically near Him in worship.

The second interpretation is of how the adulterer feels after his sin is found out and he returns to worship services: “I was almost in all evil.” That is, “Oh what a miserable man am I. I who designed and expected to enjoy my lusts with secrecy and impunity, am now made a public example and shameful spectacle in the congregation of Israel, where I was taught better things.” Considering such things will help fortify us against temptation. Sin has a way of coming out—it seems that no one will ever know what is done in the dark, in a secluded place, but time has a way of “turning the lights on” our past (cf. Num. 32:23). Either way, many give up on spiritual pursuits because adultery has killed their soul.

She’ll steal your wealth and possessions:

Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger...For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life (Prov. 5:10; Prov. 6:26).²⁴

Many sins are financially expensive (Prov. 29:3; Gen. 38:13-17), but adultery can be especially hard on the estate. Solomon said, “he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance” (Prov 29:3). The prodigal son spent his living on harlots (Luke 15:13; Luke 15:30), and got to a point that he envied pigs with a full food trough.

“Strangers will be filled with thy wealth.” These “strangers” are the adulteresses, and their husbands, children, friends, and those in league with them. Severe legal penalties accompany being caught in adultery in some countries; in ours, many men have lost their jobs

and estates in the fallout of adultery; others have paid blackmail to avoid scandals. The money which you are entrusted with as a steward for your family, “the fruit of thy labors,” will support a stranger and be displayed in his house. Many adulterous men trying to support two families with one paycheck have found that Solomon knew what he was saying.

She’ll rob you of your best years (Prov. 5:9). Instead of having “the time of his life,” adultery actually “wasted his life” (cf. Eph. 5:16). The slave of lust often sacrifices **years**—the strong, youthful years; the best years to advance one’s career and enjoy life’s pleasures; the years that should be given to the honor of a gracious God—what he will later look back on as the best period of his life.

He gives them **unto the cruel**. Fulfilling one’s base lust makes him vulnerable to selfish people who have no sympathy. The harlot who pretends to feel passionate love is one of the world’s cruelest creatures. Immorality is “cruel” also in what it does to the guilty, to his mate, and to his family. Solomon describes the cruelty of an adulteress as being similar to both a “robber” and a “hunter.” As a robber, she lies in wait, pretending friendship, but designing the greatest mischief, to rob him of all he has that is valuable. As a hunter she seeks the “precious life” of her prey (Prov. 6:26; Prov. 23:28). This is—in a literal sense—a game of life and death.

She’ll expose you to a jealous, unforgiving husband who will do all he can to punish you: “Jealousy is the rage of a man; and he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts” (Prov. 6:34-35). Lovers try to keep their spouses in the dark, but they are almost always found out (cf. Num. 32:23). Under the Old Law, adultery might be discovered miraculously by the “waters of jealousy” (Num. 5:12). Now,

most of the time, it comes out because the couple gets overconfident and careless. It is too hard to hide their feelings for each other when they are together at work, church services, or sporting events. Their episodes of rendezvous are too hard to hide—his car parked near her house, her spouse checking on a suspicious alibi, both seen leaving a motel, a spouse coming home early or back from a trip a day beforehand.

Solomon is saying, “If you are not afraid of God’s eventual wrath, then fear man’s immediate rage.” Nothing the guilty man can do to make amends will appease the man whose wife he took. His pride is offended; his reputation is sullied; his anger is fierce. He finds it hard to trust his wife when they are apart. Is she sneaking back to be with **him**? Are they playing me for a fool **again**? Each time he enters the marriage bed with his wife, he finds it hard not to think of her with the other man; he considers the threat of disease; he struggles with thoughts of violence; he finds it extremely hard to have any civil thoughts toward his betrayer and rival.

She will lead you to be abhorred of the Lord. It takes a lot to make the loving God **abhor** someone, but adultery will do it: “The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein” (Prov. 22:14). This word can also mean “one at whom the Lord is angry.” God does not take such actions with a shrug; He watches with a clenched jaw and a tight fist. Has man forgotten, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31)? God’s displeasure with adultery is seen in His commanding the guilty to be put to death under the Old Testament and in His condemning them to everlasting destruction in the New Testament (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Rev. 22:15). Paul, after listing adultery in a catalog of sins, warns, “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21). Of course, God stands

ready to forgive if an adulterer can bring himself to penitence (1 Cor. 6:11).

She will lead you to an early death:

For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead...He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;²⁵ till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life (Prov. 2:18; Prov. 7:22-23).

Under the Old Law, a caught adulterer would find his life prematurely ended under a pile of stones cast by his fellow tribesmen. That won't happen today, but the threat of early death by disease or murder is still common.

That which makes his case the more piteous is that the simple young man Solomon has in mind is not even aware of his present danger and soon-coming misery. He goes blindfolded—even laughing—to his ruin. The ox going to the slaughterhouse is unaware of what is about to happen; the fool (perhaps the drunkard, for, of all sinners, drunkards are the greatest fools) is insensible to the shame of being led to the stocks; the bird sees the bait and rushes to beat other birds to it, not knowing that she is about to be someone else's meal; just so those who violate God's law are often unaware of the consequences. The lust-drunken, infatuated adulterer, especially, is oblivious to his serious mistake.

When Solomon says, "But many strong men have been slain by her" (Prov. 7:26), perhaps he has in mind Samson, who was hunted and ultimately slain by the adulterous Delilah. Perhaps Solomon was also thinking of his own father, David, too, who by it brought a sword upon his house and cost Solomon four brothers. Paul's admonition is always appropriate: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

The end of the sensual life is to “die without instruction.” This means that he shall die in his sins, and not repent of them, as he had perhaps planned to do before meeting his Maker. Since adultery was a capital crime, those who laid themselves open to the law could be counted self-murderers.

She’ll send you on your way to hell (Prov. 5:5). The flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance, will lead to burning in flames of a more literal sort. Those entangled in this sin should be reminded that there is but a step between them and **hell**, the eternal, irrevocable end of impenitent adulterers. The adulteress’ pleasure house, though richly furnished, is actually the foyer to hell; her chambers are a staircase that goes down to the chambers of everlasting darkness.

How Does Solomon Describe The Immoral Woman?

Proverbs 5-7 (especially Proverbs 7) is the longest and most elaborate description of the adulteress in the Bible. Here we have a full picture to help us recognize a loose woman in any generation. Solomon tells his son a story to enforce the caution he had given against the sin of whoredom. The story is about a young man who was ruined by the enticements of an adulterous woman. She is portrayed as a passionate, lonely, restless woman who is careless with her reputation and reckless with the life of the young man.

Solomon was a wise man²⁶ who saw more when he saw something than others who saw the same thing. As a king, Solomon was also a judge. Perhaps he often watched out his window to keep in contact with the “real world” and see his subjects with his own eyes. Here he writes also as a prophet, who is by office a watchman (cf. Ezek. 3:17), to give warning of the approach of the enemies, and especially where they lie in ambush (2 Sam. 18:24-27).

Solomon describes what he saw one day as he “looked through my casement,²⁷ and beheld among the simple ones,” a young man “void of understanding” (Prov. 7:6-7). Movie writers of our day would take this storyline and make the harlot a heroine. The audience would find her seduction of the young man entertaining and would leave envious of him, hoping some woman would do this to them soon. Fools make a mock at sin (Prov. 14:9). Solomon doesn’t tell it as a comedy; it is a tragedy. It is not a love story; it is a documentary of the foolishness of youth and the harsh results of sin.

What Are The Characteristics Of The Immoral Woman?

She is “strange”²⁸ (Prov. 2:16). A “strange” woman here is not one who has peculiar personality traits, but is “any loose person who indulges in illicit sex.” A strange woman is one who is not a man’s own wife. His wife is “familiar”; his mistress is a “**stranger**” (even if he has known her a long time).

She “forsakes the guide of her youth” (Prov. 2:17). The guide of her youth is, literally, “the familiar friend” (cf. Prov. 16:28; Prov. 17:9). This may refer to her father’s instructions, but more likely is her husband’s. In those days they often married early, so her husband had literally been her guide from her “youth.”

She “forgets her covenant with God” (Prov. 2:17). The sin of the adulteress is not only a sin against man but also against God and His Law. Some think that the “covenant” means the matrimonial contract which is made in the presence of God. Others think that it refers to God’s law against adultery. Both are true, and Solomon may have had both in mind here. God will judge whoremongers and adulterers because they despise their oath and break His covenant (Ezek. 17:18; Mal. 2:14; Heb. 13:4).

Her “ways are moveable” (Prov. 5:6), and she is “subtil of heart” (Prov. 7:10). Her daily actions are unpredictable. She is as “unsteady as an earthquake.” She transforms herself into several shapes (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14), seeming to be what she is not. She is unstable, undependable, and gives nothing that one can hold onto. If the young man relies on her judgment, word, or secrecy, he was leaning on a broken reed that would eventually stab his hand (cf. Isa. 36:6). She has an agenda; she is a deceiver; she has two faces. Solomon wants the young man to understand that he cannot expect her to be faithful to him if she is unfaithful to her husband and unfaithful to God.

She is “evil” (Prov. 6:24). First, she proves herself “evil” to the one she entices. She tells him how much she admires him above any man, and that she loves only him. But she speaks only insincere flattery; she has no true affection for him. She no more desires his welfare than Delilah did Samson’s. She wants to pick his pocket and gratify her own lust. Second, she proves herself evil to her husband who trusted her, and violates the sacred obligation she made to him. He was the guide of her youth; by marrying him she submitted to his guidance, with a promise to attend to him only, and forsake all others. But now she has forsaken him. Third, she is evil in the sight of God Who is the One Who has the ultimate right to classify all humans and to separate them eternally based on His classification (2 Cor. 5:10).

She is “whorish” (Prov. 6:26; Prov. 30:20). This is a euphemism, of course, for “harlot.” She speaks like a harlot: “Come, therefore, and let us take our fill of love²⁹” (Prov. 7:18). She dresses like a harlot; she acts like a harlot as she gives herself to a man not her husband. A sin-saturated, tolerant society may call her a lover, a mistress, or uninhibited, but she is a harlot, even if she doesn’t ask her “John” to leave his money on the nightstand.

She is “loud” (Prov. 7:11). “Loud” (Prov. 7:11) and “clamorous” (Prov. 9:13) translate as the same word (*hamah*). Commentators say this is a difficult word which (from its use in 1 Kings 1:41 and Isaiah 22:2) seems to express the idea of being “boisterous and unrestrained, full of talk, and forward.” It is also defined as, “to make a loud sound (like English ‘hum’); by implication to be in great commotion, rage, roar.” By contrast, God said we are to be eager (study) “to be quiet” (1 Thess. 4:11); God values a “quiet spirit” (Psm. 131:2; Jer. 51:59b; 2 Thess. 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:2), especially in women (1 Pet. 3:4).

She is “stubborn”³⁰ (Prov. 7:11). She is “willful,” “disobedient,” and “ungovernable.” Hosea 4:16 uses this word of a wild heifer that refuses to submit its neck to the yoke. A godly woman is the opposite; she has a “meek³¹ spirit” (1 Pet. 3:4).

She doesn’t stay at home (Prov. 7:11-12). Prostitutes are commonly called “street-walkers” because they generally have to go “out and about” to ply their trade. While it is not a common street-walker who is designated here, the licentious wife also has to go out to find a lover. Good women who are “keepers at home” (Tit. 2:4) will find less temptation there than nearly anywhere they might be. There is a correlation between women entering the workforce (leaving the home) and the escalation of adultery and broken homes. This doesn’t mean that every woman who stays at home will remain true to her husband (sin can find one anywhere), or that every woman who works will be tempted (or a temptress), but it does acknowledge the fact that putting men and women together on a daily basis increases the opportunity for illicit relationships to develop.

She is “simple” and “knows nothing” (Prov. 9:13). She “knoweth nothing”—that is, she hasn’t considered (or doesn’t care) how she is seen by others or

what harm she is bringing to the homes, bodies, and souls of others. This phrase implies that one is ignorant with an ignorance which is willful and reckless. She doesn't **want** to know the right way. The literal Hebrew reads, "The woman of folly is boisterous, simplicity, and knows not what." The RSV translates it, "The woman knows no shame."

She feels no shame and denies her sin (Prov. 30:20b). She "eats," then wipes her mouth, and, with a bold face, says, "I haven't done anything wrong." The phrase "wipes her mouth" means that she shows indifference to the immoral act. She thinks no more of satisfying her lust with an illicit lover than she would of satisfying her hunger with a big meal. The figure may refer back to Eden's forbidden fruit or perhaps to "bread eaten in secret" (Prov. 9:17; cf. Prov. 20:17). She denies the fact of sin to her own conscience, to her family, to her partner, to his family, to the community, and to God. Her conscience is completely hardened. She is a part of the "generation" that are "pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12).

What Are Her Tactics Of Seduction?

Enter the strange woman's world with me—in imagination, where God grant that we may never enter in any other way. There are five wards—Pleasure, Satiety, Discovery, Disease, and Death. Why is she so appealing?

She flatters (Prov. 2:16; Prov. 5:3; Prov. 6:24; Prov. 7:5; Prov. 7:15; Prov. 7:21b). Notice that "flattery" is always connected with the early part of each adultery case. "Flattereth" (*hechelikhah*) is literally "she that smoothes with her words." The English "lick" is derived from this original word. She has a glib tongue. Just as false teachers employ "smooth and fair speech" to get their points across (Rom. 16:17-18), so she uses words to convert

her lover to her way.³² Solomon contrasts her lips “drop honey” and her mouth being “smoother than oil” (Prov. 5:3) with the end of such indulgence, which is “bitter as wormwood” (Prov. 5:4). A poisonous pill may taste good and go down easily, but its results are still deadly.

Adultery doesn’t start in the bedroom; it starts in the break room. A man and woman do not have to be touching for something to be going on between them. The first assault in adultery is by the “3F” battalion: flattery, flirtation, and fishing for compliments. To many people, especially women, words can be as stimulating as touching. Affairs (for women) begin with an emotional attachment which usually begins with innocent conversation. Men, on the other hand, fall for flattery because it meets their need for admiration. Chambers explains:

Affairs meet important emotional needs. That’s why, despite the suffering experienced by everyone involved, people become ensnared by them. An emotional need is a craving that, when satisfied, leaves you with a feeling of happiness and contentment and when unsatisfied, leaves you with a feeling of unhappiness and frustration. Harley says there are ten emotional needs that are usually near the top of the list for most people: the need for admiration, affection, conversation, domestic support, family commitment, financial support, honesty and openness, physical attractiveness, recreational companionship, and sexual fulfillment.³³

Men often list “admiration” as one of their top five emotional needs. A man who does not feel admired by his wife finds it easy to crave the admiration of other women. The Bible recognizes this and commands wives to “reverence³⁴ their husbands” (Eph. 5:33, cf. Eph. 5:24; 1 Pet. 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:7). Many wives unwittingly set up their husbands (and themselves) for marital failure by withholding the compliments that the woman who works in the office with him is willing to give freely. Solomon

said, “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it” (Prov. 3:27).

Men should, of course, avoid being “taken in” by flattery, regardless of their level of craving for admiration. As to “giving,” men should avoid “starting something” by flattering the opposite sex (Prov. 20:19; Prov. 26:28; Prov. 29:5). If someone deserves a compliment, then give it. However, one should be careful about complimenting a woman’s physical attributes (e.g., soft lips, beautiful eyes, nice figure), and the way she looks in a certain outfit. He should also avoid complimenting a female when no one else is around. As far as “receiving,” do not take flattery personal. “Flattery is like chewing gum—enjoy it briefly, but don’t swallow it” (cf. Eccl. 7:5). Take to heart what another wise man said: “A little flattery can make a big fool out of a little man.”

She is persistent. She used “**much** fair speech” to get the young man to yield (Prov. 7:21). Abraham was at his tent-door, seeking an opportunity to do good; she sits at the door of her house (Prov. 9:14), like a spider near its web, watching for a prey. The man she has her eye on was going “right on his way”—that is, he was minding his own business without any unchaste thoughts. When he ignores her, she does not give up easily. She chases after him, calling with urgent temptations. She takes greater pleasure in corrupting an innocent man (cf. 2 Tim. 3:6) because it represents a challenge to her; she feels more attractive if she can “win” a reluctant lover. Potiphar’s wife fits this description. She continued after Joseph **day by day**, saying “Lie with me” (Gen. 39:7; Gen. 39:12).

She uses her beauty as a weapon (Prov. 6:25). Duck hunters use decoys, dove hunters use sowed wheat in a field, tiger hunters use a swinging antelope carcass over a pit, fishermen use a worm on a hook, and an adulteress uses her feminine wares. She knows how to

“bait the hook” and “put out the decoys.” An adulteress uses her eyelids (Prov. 6:25), face (Prov. 7:13), mouth (Prov. 22:14), tongue (Prov. 6:24), and lips (Prov. 5:3) to gain the attention of her prey. Just as wine that “gives its color in the cup and moves itself aright” appeals to a drunk (Prov. 23:31), so what an adulterer sees draws him in.

She uses her **mouth** to break a young man down: “For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil” (Prov 5:3). The mouth has a special sexual attraction—with it she provides exciting, flirtatious kisses, and from it she sends forth words that set his mind racing along “lover’s lane.” It is a “deep pit” into which men “fall” (Prov. 22:14); like the tiger, they usually do not get out!

She uses her **eyelids**. After the tongue, the eyes are the most expressive part of the human anatomy. This young man often catches her making amorous glances at him; he feels her staring at him when his head is turned; he turns, and then she winks, raises an eyebrow, or gives him a “bedroom-eyes-look” that leaves no doubt of her desire. Possibly “take thee with her eyelids” (Prov. 6:25) points to the ancient custom of painting the eyelids with kohl to give brightness and a languishing expression. The wicked Jezebel “painted her face”³⁵ in an attempt to persuade Jehu (2 Kings 9:30).

She uses her body and its clothing to lure him. She wears the “attire of an harlot” (Prov. 7:10). Worldly women know the quickest way to get a man’s lustful attention is to wear brief and tight clothing that emphasizes the body’s sexual parts. David’s adultery was cued visually when he saw Bathsheba³⁶ in her “bathing suit” (2 Sam. 11).

A woman doesn’t have to be a “professional,” of course, to wear attire that is gaudy, flaunting, and designed to catch men’s eyes (cf. Gen. 38:14; Rev. 17:4). Wearing form-fitting

clothes that show the contour of the breasts, buttocks, and thighs, or low cut/ short clothes that reveal much of the breasts and thighs (especially when bending or sitting), is at best inconsiderate of men and their wives, and at worst is an open invitation to an adulterous tryst. A woman with a pure heart dresses carefully, regardless of current style (1 Tim. 2:9). “Women professing godliness” do not wear “clothes professing worldliness” (1 Tim. 2:10; cf. Jas. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

On the other hand, men must be careful not to let their eyes stray to the “eye candy” that is available to them practically every hour they are in public or in front of a television. Pure hearts and eyes “full of adultery” (2 Pet. 2:14) are not in the same person. Some men use immodest dress as an excuse for looking: “She wouldn’t wear that if she didn’t want men to notice,” or, “I can look so long as I don’t touch.” God expects men to keep their minds pure, even if women don’t keep their bodies covered: “Even gunpowder is harmless if it lands on water.” We must do as Job did, and make “a covenant with our eyes” so that we won’t “think on a maid” (Job 31:1).

Her advances soon graduate to physical flirtation and proposition: “So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him...Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves” (Prov. 7:13; Prov. 7:18). Contrary to all rules of modesty, she crossed the “touch” line and, like Potiphar’s wife, boldly invited him not only to her house, but to her bed (Prov. 7:17; Gen. 39:12). In Hebrew, “impudent face” indicates that “she strengthened her countenance, assumed the most confident look she could, endeavored to appear friendly and sincere.”³⁷ Adam Clarke says the phrase “take our fill of love” is, literally, “Let us revel in the breasts.” The second phrase is even more graphic. Clarke continues, “Let us solace ourselves

with loves” means “let us gratify each other with loves, with the utmost delights.” He then remarks: “This does not half express the original, but I forbear...The original itself is too gross to be literally translated.” Here is the bold language of the bad girl.

She prepares a meal for them to share (Prov. 7:14). Following the “the-way-to-a-man’s-heart-is-through-his-stomach” rule, she told him that she had ready a delicious banquet for two. She had been to the temple and needed someone to help her eat the sacrificial meal. A big part of the flesh of the peace-offerings was returned to the offerer, so worshippers often feasted with friends on the day of sacrifice. If this was a “peace-offering of thanksgiving,” it had to all be eaten the same day and none left until the morning (Lev. 7:15). In other words, she was telling him that she had a lot of good food that needed to be eaten immediately.

This adulteress is so bold as to proposition him “at the church building” (cf. 1 Sam. 2:22). She abused God’s law of charity and generosity and made it an excuse for gluttony and lust. She made a peace-offering a “sin offering” (in a bad sense); what was designed to honor God became the fuel of lust. She had “settled her account with the Almighty” (paid her vows); now she was ready to start another tab of sins. She might have also mentioned this religious connection to make what she was proposing somehow seem less evil.

This warns us of the danger of such affairs developing between church members. People are not immune from temptation just because they have been baptized and hear sermons each week. The devil must try hardest to tempt Christians, for the damage is compounded when destruction is added to the church, as well as individuals, families, and society. Far from being uncommon, perhaps the majority of churches (besides those with small

memberships) have faced an adulterous situation within the last decade.

She appealed to all five of his senses: taste (Prov. 7:14), vision (Prov. 7:16), touch (Prov. 7:16), smell (Prov. 7:17), and hearing (Prov. 7:21). She took care to have the environment appealing and told him she had a “love nest” ready (Prov. 7:16). Wicked women employ every means of beautifying their bodies—their clothing, their fragrance, and their quarters—to entice men. The luxurious description of the house shows this woman’s position and wealth. She hopes the mention of the bed with its ornaments and perfumes will inflame his lust.³⁸ Bait for the trap!

The adulteress prostitutes God’s gifts. God invented sex for married people—He made us “male and female” (Gen. 1:26-27). Everything the adulteress proposed was legitimate for the young man to enjoy—with his wife (or even the adulteress with her “good man”). Someone observed that adulteresses put the effort into sex that wives should. She put thought and energy into it; she made it exciting; she made an evening of it; she looked forward to it. Adulteresses might be far less successful if married couples did the same. According to the best-selling book *His Needs, Her Needs*, “an attractive spouse” is third on “his” list. While the Bible emphasizes (as should we), the inner person over the exterior (1 Sam. 16:7), it does acknowledge that looks play a part in male/female relations (Gen. 12:14-15; Gen. 24:16; Gen. 26:7; Gen. 29:17; Gen. 39:6; 1 Sam. 16:12; Prov. 11:22). In the Bible’s book on “married love,” (Song of Solomon) the words “look,” “see,” and “eyes” (in various forms) are used seventeen times (in only eight chapters). This shows that external appearances do play a part in legitimate human sexuality.

We all understand that both husbands and wives are going to age over the years of marriage. They will lose

some of the physical attractiveness they had in high school and college. Still, we need not speed up the process by disregarding our appearance. One counselor said, “Most pay too much attention to the physical appearance before marriage and too little attention to it afterward.” Another observed, “If the only time a wife dresses up is for church or some social gathering then she may be turning her husband’s head in a different direction.” Both husbands and wives should be more concerned about what their **mates** think about their hairstyles or clothes than what their friends think.

She anticipates his objections and has an answer for them (Prov. 7:19). She anticipated that he would not want to risk being found out by her husband. (1) What if her husband should catch them in adultery, in the very act (cf. John 8:4)? This would be a likely concern, as it would certainly not be the first time, or the last. She assures him that the “good man of the house” (she does not call him her husband) is out of town. They can have their fling and no one will ever know. But (2) what if he comes back sooner than expected? He won’t, she assures: “He’s gone on a long trip, and will not return suddenly; he appointed the day of his return, and he never comes home sooner than he says he will.” But (3) he might run out of money and have to come home sooner than expected. “No, he has taken a bag of money with him.” He will not be home again until the “full moon”³⁹ (Prov 7:20). Sinners always think that they have everything taken care of, but have you noticed that they still get caught very often? They think no further than not getting caught by people, too, but there is another Who sees (Heb. 4:13; Rev. 20:12).

This verse also points to the fact that there are innocent spouses involved when adultery is planned and consummated. This woman’s husband was evidently a well-to-do merchant, who traveled for long periods to trade,

buy goods, and build up an inventory. It is a pity that an honest, industrious man (especially if “good man” is to be taken literally) should be taken advantage of when he is out working to support his family.

She appeals to his sense of adventure/rebellion:

“Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant” (Prov. 9:17). She has appealed to the lust of the eyes (“attire of an harlot”), the lust of the flesh (“solace ourselves with loves”), and now she appeals to the pride of life (cf. 1 John 2:16). To be one’s own master, to disregard rules, to throw off restraint has been tempting *homo sapiens* since Adam and Eve plucked the fruit of worldly wisdom from the off-limits tree. Most of the music that has been popular with each succeeding generation of teens for the last half-century (at least) appeals to the youthful desire to rebel against God, parents, teachers, and, increasingly, policeman.

Pleasures are often more attractive **because** they are forbidden: “Stolen melons taste better than ‘store-bought’ melons.” This is true with the temptation to be with the adulteress: “Her very strangeness and looseness made her exciting and tempting. Such a person presents the young man, yes, any man, with a powerful sexual attraction.” The pleasures of prohibited lusts are boasted to be better than prescribed love, “single sex” better than “married love.” Is it true? Let James answer it: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” (Jas. 1:17). God’s gifts—including the sexual relationship—are “perfect”; those Satan offers are “for a season” (Heb. 11:25).

The allowed pleasures of marriage far transcend the disallowed pleasures of whoredom. A man ravished with the love of a faithful, virtuous wife scorns the offer of forbidden pleasures by a woman whose lack of virtue says her charms are only (at best) skin-deep: “Why prefer stagnant puddle-water to pure living waters out of thy

own well?” Why would any man choose the arms, bosom, and intimacies of an impure, ungodly woman to the sweet, attractive, and good wife whom he has personally chosen and shared life with since youth? No, “stolen waters” are not better!

She “increases transgressions⁴⁰ among men” (Prov. 23:28b). Women and strong drink cause many millions to transgress in each generation (and both are linked in Solomon’s warnings, Proverbs 23:26-35). The “increases transgressions” phrase has two applications. First, one adulteress may be the ruin of many men over a lifetime: “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). God never intended any woman to be community property like the old town-well or the cow-pasture salt block.

Second, an adulterer soon finds himself committing other sins. As DeHoff wrote, “every sin has a group of cousins who always come to visit”: “This vice, like a whirlpool, sweeps all others into its vortex.” Falsehood invariably, and murder occasionally, are directly associated with adultery. David’s adultery soon led to deceit, hypocrisy, plotting, and murder (2 Sam. 11).

What Is The Best Defense Against A Loose Woman?

Many have committed adultery not out of a deliberate, unchaste desire but simply because they did not take the necessary steps to prevent it. After adultery has taken place, many times both the guilty and the innocent partners say, “I never saw this coming; how did it happen?” Jesus’ words are very appropriate in dealing with sexual temptation: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41; Prov. 22:14). Solomon advises a threefold approach:

1. *Guard your mind* (Prov. 23:7; Matt. 5:28). One is in danger as soon as his mind wanders in her direction.

2. *Keep away from her*. Avoid all contact, literally as well as mentally.

3. *Look past her*, farther down the road, to the countless slain, to the chambers of death.

Pay attention to wisdom/understanding (Prov. 5:1; Prov. 5:7; Prov. 5:12; Prov. 6:23; Prov. 6:32; Prov. 7:1ff; Prov. 8:1-3). Solomon tells the young man to keep God's law "as the apple⁴¹ of thine eye" (Prov 7:2) and count wisdom as a "kinswoman."⁴² Bulwark No. 1 is to give heed to wisdom.

Proverbs 7 is one of the most impressive chapters in the Bible. In it, young men are given a clear choice between two "women," Wisdom and Folly. They have been issued two invitations. On one hand they hear the well-spoken, sensible voice of wisdom in daylight. On the other they hear the seductive tones of the temptress speaking in the night (Prov. 7:6-21). Both of them shout their messages from the highest places, inviting the simple ones to "turn in hither." Wisdom says, "Let the simple turn in to me." "No," says Folly, "Let the simple turn in to **me**." The foolish woman has a house, but it is no stately palace with seven pillars, like the home of Wisdom. She sits at the door, her position as prominent as Wisdom's, counterfeiting her voice, making the same offer to the same class. She employs the same words as wisdom uses; she is going to "educate" the "simple" who are "void of understanding." Every man makes his choice of which he shall patronize.

The one tempted was a **young** man (Prov. 7:7). Fleshly lusts are called "**youthful** lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). The wise man points the young to a better way. We must not rob God of the first and best of our time (Eph. 4:16; 2 Cor. 6:2); we must not debauch our minds while they are tender; we must not lay a foundation in youth for a bad life ever after.

The one tempted was a **simple** man. In the best sense, the “simple” are the “inexperienced, naïve, those easily led astray”; in the worst sense, these are those who are “looking for trouble; those open to all forms of evil.” This young man void of understanding ventured to sea without ballast, without pilot, cord, or compass; he knew not how to depart from evil, which is the best understanding (Job 28:28).

Memorize Scripture (Prov. 7:1-5). Worldly discretion, secular education, nor moral precepts are sufficient preservatives against lust. Only God’s commandments have that much power: “by them mightest war a good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18; cf. Rom. 1:16): “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psm. 119:9). This involves much more than a casual reading of Scripture. The Word of God must be reverently studied, loved, and memorized so that it becomes part of us (Job. 23:12; Deut. 6:8-9). It needs to be available in instant recall when temptation knocks; it is not enough to have a Bible “back at the house somewhere.” Some good Scriptures for men to commit to memory are Matthew 5:8; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:22; and excerpts from Proverbs 5-7.

Keep good company (Prov. 7:7). Solomon seems to imply that the young man who went astray kept bad company (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33). He was a young man “among the youths” (Prov. 7:7)—that is, “a silly young man among the simple ones.” How many young men’s natural reticence would have kept them out of a brothel, had not their friends “double-dog dared” them, or otherwise made them feel pressured to “join the ranks of men”? How many other young people crossed the line on a date just to have something to tell their friends about when they got back to school on Monday? How many adults would have

avoided adultery except some “friend” encouraged them by saying, “She’s giving you ‘the eye’; go talk to her.” If, on the other hand, this young man, being conscious of his own weakness, had associated with good friends, the story might have read differently. Christ, at twelve years old, was already in the temple conversing with the doctors (Luke 2:46). Timothy traveled with Paul (2 Cor. 1:1; Phile. 1:1; Heb. 13:23); John Mark seems to have been close to Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13).

Remember the lessons of your parents/teachers (Prov. 5:12-13); follow the example of older, faithful men (Prov. 23:26). “Know-it-all” teens are fools. Solomon said so (Prov. 1:7-8). Most get to a point—often when facing the serious consequences⁴³ of the lifestyle they were warned about (before they tuned out). Solomon saw it happen: “And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!” (Prov 5:12-13). “He hated to be **reformed**; therefore he hated to be **informed**.” On the other hand, Solomon was willing to show the way, and not merely tell it: “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways” (Prov. 23:26).

Parents aren’t know-it-alls, and most of them know it. Good parents are “engaged” in their children’s lives, though. Bad parents don’t know what’s going on and don’t care. They don’t want to be bothered; they let their children do what they want; they are too busy with their own lives to get involved in their children’s. Which kind are **your** parents? If you have the kind that care enough to teach and advise, then **listen**. If you have the other kind, then find a good Christian mentor (a Bible teacher, preacher, youth minister, elder, or deacon) and talk to them about dating and marriage. **It’s important.**

Solomon implies here that only the strong teaching and example of parents can save young men from getting

involved with a loose woman sometime in their lives. There is also an implicit recognition that the teaching of our childhood stays with us throughout life and that the adult example of a father to his adult children still matters.

Teachers⁴⁴ don't know everything, either. They do know **some** things—and they try to help young people by passing on what they know to the next generation (1 Tim. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:2; Tit. 2:3-4). To be frank, your Bible teachers could do something else with their time besides poring over study materials getting ready for Sunday school and Wednesday class. It's usually a "thankless" task. Why do it? We can't speak for every one, but the majority like to be around young people; they care; they think they can help. **Listen to them.**

Stay away from her (Prov. 5:8; Prov. 7:8; Prov. 7:25). Some temptations we defeat by "standing and fighting" (cf. Phil. 1:17); others we defeat by "turning and running." Fornication and adultery are in the second category. In deep-shaft coal mines, there is a house built over the elevator. When one enters that house and gets on the elevator, it goes only one direction—down. That's the way it is when one goes with an adulteress. The only way from there is "down." It is foolish to play on the brink of a "deep ditch" and a "narrow pit" (Prov. 23:27).

Paul compared sin to a trap (2 Tim. 2:26). The best way to keep a foot from getting caught is to stay away from the trap. Those that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. Paul counseled his son in the faith, Timothy, to shun youthful passions (2 Tim. 2:22), and in general advised abstaining from every appearance (form) of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). If we put ourselves **into** temptation, we throw ourselves **out of** God's protection (cf. Matt. 6:11).

God put a "quarantine" around the harlot's house. Quarantines keep people isolated from disease; God's quarantine keeps men from the contamination of sin. Paul

said, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators” (1 Cor. 5:9).⁴⁵ We are told to “come...out from among them” and to be “separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). The young man watched by Solomon violated the quarantine and soon had the contagion. He waited to approach her house until it was dark. Four degrees of darkness are described: twilight, evening, night, and darkness⁴⁶ (Prov. 7:9). Sinners always prefer the cover of darkness (Prov. 24:15; 1 Thess. 5:7). The mention of these different times may suggest that he continued to walk up and down in front of the woman’s house working up his courage to go in.

It also implies that he had time to burn. At a time when other young men were at home resting for work the next day, he was out “on the prowl.” One of the sins of Sodom was abundance of idleness (Ezek. 16:49). When we have nothing to do, the devil will quickly find us something to do. The young man’s corruptions at length triumphed over his convictions. He could not stop his ear against such a charmer, but surrendered himself her captive.

Solomon is saying to his son:

If your way should happen to lie near her, and your business requires that you be within the reach of her charms, it is best to alter your course, rather than expose yourself to danger. Don’t come near the door of her house; go on the other side of the street, nay, go on the other street, though it’s out of your way.

In practical terms, Solomon is saying that we must not put ourselves in compromising situations (Deut. 11:16; Prov. 4:14; Prov. 6:24). We have to keep going “right on our way” instead of stopping and getting involved. A godly man does not stand in the way with sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful (Psm. 1:1). We ought to have a very great dread and detestation of sin. Joseph fled the presence of Potipher’s seductive wife (Gen. 39:10-12). There is no

shame in being a Joseph who puts the greatest possible distance, in the shortest possible time, between a man and his temptress. If you ever find yourself infatuated with someone other than your spouse, don't walk away—**run!**

Some Guidelines To Help Avoid Sexual Temptation

1. *Recognize your weak points.* One study showed that a person is especially vulnerable after a major let-down, or a major success. Those who are depressed can easily fall into an illicit relationship.

2. *Do not send mixed messages to those around you.* Avoid prolonged stares, lingering touches, and any joking that might be construed as flirting.

3. *Don't listen to complaints about another person's spouse if you are the opposite sex.*

4. *Always be aware of your surroundings.* If she's (he's) in the break room, go outside. If she is on one side of the ball field, sit on the other. If she is in your social group, drop out. In most cases, you are probably friends with this person. Drop the friendship. Put some emotional distance between you before it goes any further. It is better that they think you have turned against them than for adultery to take place. Whatever you do, don't ever tell the person how you feel.

5. *Be especially careful when out of your routine* (1 Pet. 5:8). Business trips, changing jobs, vacations, new membership at a gym or sports team, and similar changes are often occasions when mates go astray. When separated from your spouse overnight, call your spouse and talk to your children at least every night—and, if you feel tempted, call them immediately. Take pictures of your family and set them up in your motel room. Block out any of the sex channels on TV—or just leave it off altogether (there is plenty of sexual images on any channel). According to Harley and Chambers:

Those most likely to engage in one-night stands are people who travel as part of their job—

interstate truck drivers, airline pilots, flight attendants, traveling sales representatives, business consultants, actors, musicians, seminar speakers. The one on a trip is not the only one vulnerable—the one who is left alone is also more likely to have an affair [than those who have “normal” family lives...]⁴⁷

6. *Keep visual reminders of your marriage contract.*

Always wear your wedding ring when in public. Keep pictures of your spouse in your wallet and in your workspace. Frame your marriage certificate and keep in on a prominent wall. Remember this is a contract you made with God, your parents, friends, church, and nation, to be faithful to your partner. When you placed that ring on your mate’s finger, you promised your heart, affections, loyalty, and faithfulness “until death do you part.”

7. *Watch your friendships and don’t let them cross the line.* Don’t ever do anything when your mate is absent that you would not do with them present. Most affairs begin by “just being friends.” One study shows that “friends” are those most likely to be the adulterous companion (24%, followed by “co-workers,” 23%). Keep the right kind of friends. People who tell you dirty stories or urge you toward flirtation are not really your friends. Avoid them! This is not because you are too good for them but because you are not good enough for them.

8. *Be aware of the power that immodest dress has on you, or the message it might send to someone else.* If you have doubts about whether something is appropriate, don’t wear it. Err on the side of caution and discretion.

9. *If a line has been crossed, you are afraid it might soon be, or you have feelings that you know you should not have, change jobs, break with a set of friends, change congregations, move from your neighborhood, or change your entertainment / recreation (completely avoid the place where you see this person).*

In a case where adultery has taken place, the need for radical, total separation is great. Harley and Chambers explain that an affair is a strong addiction and thus must be treated as one:

The analogy between chemical addiction and an affair is striking. In both cases, the first step toward recovery is admitting that the addiction is self-destructive and harmful to those whom the addict cares for the most—his or her family. After recognizing the need to overcome the addiction, the next step is to suffer through the symptoms of withdrawal. Addicts are often admitted to a hospital or treatment program during the first few weeks of withdrawal to ensure total separation from the addicting substance. Alcoholics, for example, must completely avoid contact with any alcoholic beverage to gain control over their addictive behavior. They must avoid places where alcohol is likely to be found, such as bars and parties. They must even avoid friends who drink occasionally in their presence. They must surround themselves with an alcohol-free environment. In the same way, when a wayward spouse must separate from the lover, extraordinary precautions must be taken to avoid all contact with the lover—for life.⁴⁸

Willard Harley recommends extreme measures to ensure total separation for life from a former lover. He goes on:

Several years ago, I owned and operated ten chemical dependency treatment clinics. At first, we used several different treatment strategies. For some, we tried to encourage moderation, and for others, we tried to achieve total abstinence. It wasn't long before all the counselors agreed that total abstinence was the only way to save drug or alcohol addicts from their self-destructive behavior. Moderation was impossible. And, over years, I've found my total-separation strategy to be very effective in ending affairs in a way that makes marital recovery

possible. Without total separation, marital recovery is almost impossible.⁴⁹

Have a healthy sexual relationship with your own spouse:

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well....Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee....Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe;⁵⁰ let her breasts satisfy thee⁵¹ at all times; and be thou ravished⁵² always with her love (Prov. 5:15; Prov. 5:17; Prov. 5:19).

Instead of carrying on immorally, Solomon counseled his son to get married. Paul tells young men the same thing a thousand years later: “Let young men marry, marry and not burn” (1 Cor. 7:9). They can then “drink from their own well,” be satisfied at their own cisterns, and enjoy their own fountains⁵³ (Prov. 5:15; Prov. 5:18). A husband is to be “satisfied” with his wife’s charms. “Satisfy” (*ravah*) here means, “to slake the thirst; make drunk, take the fill, satiate, abundantly satisfy.” It literally expresses “lying between the breasts” (cf. S. of Sol. 1:13; cf. Ezek. 23:3; Ezek. 23:8; Ezek. 23:21) and is the same word the adulteress uses in her offer to her prey (Ezek. 7:18). A young man should desire no better diversion from study and business than innocent and pleasant experiences with his own wife.

According to *His Needs/Her Needs*⁵⁴, sexual satisfaction is the most often-expressed need men have in marriage. It is not a sin to fulfill one’s natural desires; the sin comes in fulfilling them in an unlawful way. Men and women were—literally—made for each other. God made them “male” and “female” (Gen. 1:27) which makes the sexual union possible. He made woman to be man’s “suitable helper” (Gen. 2:18). No one can complain that God has forbidden them the pleasures for which they have natural desires. God has graciously provided for their

regular gratification. He wants us to enjoy the satisfaction of lawful marriage. To paraphrase the language of Genesis, God has said, “Aside from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou mayest not indeed eat of every tree of the garden, but choose thee out one, which pleasest thee, and of that thou mayest freely eat” (Gen. 2:16).

Married people are to be content with the delights God allows—and not go to another’s bed.⁵⁵ Solomon asks the young man, “Why destroy yourself for those delights which may not be enjoyed without danger? Why damn yourself in sin when you can have the same joy in marriage?” Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” In other areas of life, we don’t steal from others. We have our own garden—we do not steal out of a neighbor’s garden. We have our own flowers—we won’t steal from a neighbor’s flowerbed.

The phrase “at all times” is important. When a couple marries, each promises to be faithful to each other for life. They agree to be each other’s only sexual partner “until death” separates them. This commitment is made because each trusts the other to meet their sexual needs, to be sexually available, and sexually responsive. The need for sex is a very exclusive need, and one is totally dependent on their spouse to meet it. There is no other ethical choice. Paul wrote:

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence:⁵⁶ and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent⁵⁷ for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency⁵⁸ (1 Cor. 7:2-5).

The word “defraud”⁵⁹ means “to cheat.” Some spouses have “cheated on” their mates because their mates “cheated” them in the marriage bed. One counselor observed that many wives will not meet their husbands’ desires unless they do something for them (e.g., clean the house, buy a gift) and that this could contribute to seeking sex outside of marriage. (This does not excuse adultery, of course, but is one innocent who drives a spouse to another to have needs met?) Note also that Paul said that both are to “consent” (be in agreement with) to a decision to forgo conjugal activity and that it must not be too extended lest temptation grow too strong.

On the other hand, Matthew Henry points out that this means “at all **convenient** times; for that there may be excess in the use of the marriage.” Clarke adds, “in all ages and conditions. Do not only love her when she is young and beautiful, but also when she is old and shapeless.”

Have children with your mate (Prov. 5:16). The terms “fountains” and “rivers of waters” refer to the couple’s children (keeping the figure of the previous verse for marriage, a metonymy of the cause of the effect):

Children are a heritage of Jehovah; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man... Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, In the innermost parts of thy house; thy children like olive plants, round about thy table (Psm. 127:3-5; Psm. 128:3).

A man who takes delight in his children and looks upon them with pleasure is a man who is fortified against adultery—even in those periods when his relationship with his wife may not be at its peak. One considering adultery should think seriously if he really wants his children to call another man “daddy.” That is a **very** real possibility if the marriage covenant is broken and the wife is free to marry again (cf. Matt. 19:9).

Enjoy recreational companionship with your mate: “rejoice with the wife of thy youth” (Prov. 5:18). Most men list “recreational companionship” as their second greatest need in marriage.⁶⁰ A need for recreational companionship combines two needs into one: the need to engage in recreational activities and the need to have a companion. During courtship, most couples constantly plan fun things to “do together.” They are each other’s favorite recreational companions. After marriage, too often, they revert back to friends as their chief recreational companions. Men base their friendships on **doing**; women base theirs on **talking** (conversation). To have a good marriage, there needs to be a good mixture. He needs to “talk” to her; she needs to “play” with him.

Isaac “sported” with Rebekah (Gen. 26:8). This word (*tsachaq*) means “to laugh outright (in merriment or scorn); by implication, to play or make sport.”

1. *Couples should try to find things to rejoice over together **daily**.* Share the daily “funnies”—jot down things that happened if you have trouble remembering them. Share things you read that amused you. Look for humorous things around you—if you have small children, then there will be a constant supply. Laugh at each other’s jokes. When dating, you likely were quick to laugh when the other tried to be funny. You knew that this was a good way to win their affection; after marriage, it is a good way to keep their affection.

2. *Couples should find time to rejoice together **monthly**.*⁶¹ At least once a month, they might have “dinner and a movie” together. Or it might just be walking around the mall and going into favorite stores. Or it might be a Saturday morning spent at yard sales. Or it might be a sport or game you both enjoy (tennis, golf, bowling, attending ball games, fishing, hunting, or playing cards). The number one activity, incidentally, for helping families

stay together is **camping!** The main thing is to do it **alone...and do it together.** That is, do not take the children, and do not go with other couples. Sure, there are times for both, but couples need some time for undivided attention while doing what they enjoy doing. Young couples, especially, will probably have to budget for such activities ahead of time.

3. *Couples should rejoice together **annually.*** One getaway weekend (perhaps on the anniversary) can do wonders to spice up, rekindle, and strengthen a relationship. Build memories, make the other happy, do something you've never done before—or not in a long time.

This verse also implies that both spouses maintain a good attitude toward each other. It is taken for granted that the bridegroom rejoices over his bride (Isa. 62:5), but Solomon gives it as a command from God. “Rejoice” (*samach*) here means, “to brighten up, be gleesome; cheer up.” As an older man, Solomon repeated himself: “Live joyfully⁶² with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life” (Eccl. 9:9). When couples become consistently “grumpy” with each other, they begin to feel “distant” from each other. This distance opens them up to the temptation of emotional connection with someone else.

The marriage of Nabal and Abigail is a good negative case study. Nabal was a “churlish” man (1 Sam. 25:3). This word (*qasheh*) means, “severe, cruel, grievous, hard-hearted, obstinate, rough.” Those are not characteristics which lend themselves to successful marriage-building! What was he like to be around?

1. *He “railed”⁶³ on David’s messengers* (1 Sam. 25:14). How do you suppose he talked to his wife? Perhaps as Jezebel, who spoke disrespectfully to Ahab (1 Kings 21:7).

2. *His co-workers said nobody could talk to him* (1 Sam. 25:17).

3. *His wife had to hide things from him* (1 Sam. 25:19).

4. *His own wife called him a son of Belial and a fool* (1 Sam. 25:25).

5. *His heart was merry in himself* (wine) (1 Sam. 25:36).

This also implies that the couple continues to express affection for each other (cf. Gen. 29:20; S. of Sol. 1:2; S. of Sol. 7:10). It may be something as simple as holding hands in public, or telling the other “you love them” or that “you missed them” at least once a day. It may be letting her know that she looks beautiful or that you still think he’s a funny guy. Many people have affairs because someone else is willing to give them the attention they need. All have the need to be wanted and loved.

Remember that God sees and ponders our actions: “For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings” (Prov. 5:21). No one can conceal his deeds from God. The Bible says:

The eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth (2 Chron. 16:9)

Doth not he see my ways? (Job 31:4)

His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and he seeth all his goings (Job 34:21; Prov. 15:3; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 16:17; Jer. 32:19; Hos. 7:2).

God does not cast an eye upon men’s ways occasionally; we are always in His view and under His inspection. Dare we sin against God in His sight, and do wickedness under His eye which we would be embarrassed to do in the presence of others like us? God will call sinners into account for it, for He not only sees, but ponders. The simple young man does not ponder his path (Prov. 5:6), but God does (Prov. 5:21).

When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife, he refused, saying, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). Those who have affairs think

that they can keep them secret, which usually they can't, but even if they could, can they hide from God? If they escape the rage of a jealous husband or wife and the sentence of a divorce, yet they shall surely face the righteous judgment of God (2 Cor. 5:10): "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4b).

Don't lust after her beauty in your heart (Prov. 6:25). The simple young man sees himself as one on the verge of satisfying his curiosity concerning what happens in sex. He thinks about what it would be like. The older man tempted by a strange woman wonders what it would be like **with her**. Each undresses her with his eyes when they are together and takes home the mental images. Both muse over it while lying in bed. He daydreams of it while going about his routine at work or school.

These activities are nothing less than sexual foreplay. Sex doesn't begin in the bedroom or the backseat of a car. It begins in the mind. Solomon says that this is where it must stop if we are going to win over the loose woman: "Lust⁶⁴ not after her beauty in thine heart" (Prov. 6:25). "Lust" here literally means to see her as a "delectable thing"; it refers to "a burning desire for intimacies with her." **Pulpit Commentary** says, "The admonition is a warning to repress the very first inclination to unchaste desires." To harbor unchaste thoughts and feelings in one's heart is to be guilty of adultery-in-the-heart before God. Jesus said, "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). This reminds us of James' discussion of how sin develops: "a man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed" (Jas. 1:14-15). It was "lust" in Amnon's heart for his half-sister Tamar that caused him to rape her (2 Sam. 13:1-14).

We are fed a constant diet of temptation (billboards, television, magazines, songs, books). **Everyone** is tempted

(Jas. 1:14-15), so we must learn to control our thoughts, or our thoughts will control us (Deut. 4:15; Prov. 25:28; Gal. 6:8; 1 Pet. 2:11). Temptation seldom breaks down the front door of the conscience; it just quietly enters the back door of the portals of the mind. There is no sin in appreciating someone's beauty, but it becomes lust when one starts to mentally undress, compare, and visualize an encounter.

What are some guidelines?

1. *Monitor your media intake* (Psm. 101:3). Feed on good things (Phil. 4:8; Mat. 5:6), not evil (Gal. 5:16; 2 Tim. 2:22). Don't read romance novels, watch soaps, or be entertained by sexy pictures in magazines and on TV.

2. *Put on the whole armor of God* (Eph. 6:11; 2 Chron. 20:15).

3. *Ask for God's help* (Matt. 6:11; 2 Pet. 2:9).

Don't touch her: "whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent" (Prov. 6:29). Paul said we are not to "touch" any unclean thing (2 Cor. 6:17). Do not play office games. The casual touching of those around you and the flirtatious games are not childish because of where they lead. It is wise to stay away from "hands-on" greetings and goodbyes. There is nothing wrong with shaking hands with the opposite sex, or even a hug under the right circumstances, but remember a touch can be a powerful thing. A simple touch can be "electric"—and we're not talking about static electricity! The little touches made in conversation, hugs in greeting and parting, and prolonged handshakes, each can be sexually stimulating if "something is going on" between two people.

Don't overestimate your strength (Prov. 7:26). She "forced him...she caused him to yield" (Prov. 7:21). She is only one woman perhaps weighing only a little over a hundred pounds, but she has ruined many strong men. The picture is of a harlot as a ruthless conqueror who "leaves a field of battle strewn with corpses."⁶⁵ On that

battlefield fell some pretty famous warriors: the strong man Samson (Judg. 16:1), the great David (2 Sam. 11:2-4), and even Solomon himself (Neh. 13:26; 1 Kings 11:1-4). Surely, “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

These phrases argue that there was some reluctance on his part. His conscience or his fears kept him at arm’s length. This appears to be the first time he had yielded to this temptation—but would it be the last? Many husbands think that they will **never** fall into this sin. At least that’s what many adulterers tell counselors they thought **before** it happened to them. We must not think that an affair cannot happen to us; we must take steps to prevent it. Temptation often comes in a door that has been deliberately left open. We should not be so confident of our spiritual strength that we venture upon the brink of sin—flirt with it—promising to ourselves that “hitherto we will come and no further” (cf. Job 38:11). If we thrust ourselves into temptation, we mocked God when we prayed, “Lead us not into temptation” (Matt. 6:13).

Conclusion

A little boy on the way home: “Daddy, what does it mean, “Thou shalt not commit **agriculture**?” His father was known for his quick wit. He said, “Son that means that you are not to plow in another man’s field.”

Endnotes

1 Eighty of nine-hundred and fifteen verses (8.5%), including two entire chapters (Prov. 5; Prov. 7).

2 Albert Barnes, **Barnes Notes**, (Baker Book House, 1879), p. 33

3 Joseph Parker, **Preaching Through The Bible**, Volume 7 (Baker Book House, 1987), p. 59.

4 *zimmah*, “an especially a bad one.” All Hebrew/Greek notes are from **Strongs** in Quickverse software, version 7.0

5 Generally, when both words are used in the same context, “fornication” refers to sex between two unmarried

individuals; “adultery” refers to sex between two who are married but not to each other (or at least one of them is married, as in Solomon’s example in Proverbs 7).

6 *machah*, “to stroke or rub; by implication to erase; also to smooth (as if with oil), i.e. grease or make fat.”

7 Matthew Henry, **Commentary On The Whole Bible** (Quickverse Bible Software, Version 7.0), comments on Proverbs 6:33.

8 How does this agree with God’s law, which required only that he should restore double, or with a sheep four-fold, and an ox five-fold (Exod. 21:1; Exod. 21:4; Exod. 22:1-4; cf. David’s judgment, 2 Sam. 12:6). The number of seven may be used here as a round number (cf. Gen. 4:24; Lev. 26:28), or it may denote full measure. Some think that, as thefts were multiplied, so the punishment of it was increased.

9 Willard F. Harley, Jr., and Jennifer Harley Chambers, **Surviving An Affair** (Fleming H. Revell, 1998), pp. 51, 82.

10 This passage led some to declare that the sin of adultery was unpardonable. Adam Clarke points out that “none” here means “few or none; an hyperbolic expression,” as used in Isaiah 64:7.

11 *lakad*, “to catch in a net, trap or pit.”

12 Harley & Chambers, p. 22.

13 Adam Clarke, **Clarke’s Commentary**, Volume 3 (Abingdon Press), p. 715. Of course, a beautiful reminder fits here: Christ came “to proclaim release to the captives” (Luke 4:18).

14 Harley & Chambers, p. 56.

15 *Basar*, the outside skin; “body,” *she’er*, the inner flesh, next to the bones.

16 Cf. Clarke, p. 714.

17 Even condom packets explain that they are not a guarantee against disease. They often come off or break; bodily fluid still transfers, even if all the semen is contained. The only truly safe sex is monogamous marriage between two who virgins when they marry.

18 **Focus On The Family Newsletter** (February 1992), pp. 2-5. His footnotes are: **66**. Source: Alan Guttmacher Institute. Reported by Kim Painter in “Few Changes in Profile of Women Getting Abortions,” USA Today, 8 August 1996, 4A. **67**. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control, 1991 Division of STD/HIV Prevention, Annual Report, 13. **68**. Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, reported in “Chlamydia Infections Rising,” Reuters News Service, 10 March 1997. **69**. Kay Stone, Sexually Transmitted Diseases Division,

Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, t.i., 20 March 1992. **70.** “Condom Roulette,” Family Research Council, In Focus, 1992, 1.

19 Wormwood comes from a shrub of bitter taste, used in the preparation of absinthe, which is traditionally used as medicine for deworming (whence the name). In Eastern medicine this herb, the Absinthium of Greek and Latin botanists, was looked upon as poisonous rather than medicinal (cf. Rev. 8:11).

20 Jim Dethmer, “The Payoff for Sexual Purity” (Seeds Tape Ministry, January 31, 1993).

21 This information is from: Laura Vanderkam, “The Forum: ‘Sexually active girls’ lament: Why didn’t I wait?,” **USA Today** (June 12, 2003).

22 Harley and Chambers, p. 51.

23 Ibid, p. 50.

24 The American Standard Version and the American Jewish Translation both follow the King James Version in bringing out the idea that penury results from harlotry; the RSV has, “an adulteress takes a man’s very soul.” The basic difficulty lies in the meaning of the Hebrew preposition *beadh*, which can mean either “on account of,” or “in exchange for.” Another problem is whether the same woman is meant in both verses, or whether a harlot is referred to in the first and an adulteress in the second. Although the latter makes good sense (cf. RSV), the fact that this section does not deal with harlots or prostitutes as such militates against such a distinction. “Piece of bread”: Lit., “round loaf of bread,” the usual form of bread made in the East.

25 There is some ambiguity as to how to translate this phrase. Instead of “as a fool to the correction of the stocks,” the RSV has, “as a stag is caught fast”; the ASV, “or as one in fetters to the correction of the fool”; and Moffatt, “like a dog cajoled to the muzzle.”

26 Coffman confesses amazement that Solomon was himself “the most fantastic violator of these warnings ever known. There is a possibility that Solomon, the author of these warnings, gave them such overwhelming emphasis because these were the very sins that ruined him.” **The Believer’s Commentary on the Bible**, Volume 2: The Wisdom Literature (ACU Press, 1993), pp. 27-28.

27 “This ancient window was something comparable to our Venetian blinds.” Latticework was used over windows and other areas by crossing laths over each other for privacy (one could look out without being seen and others could not look in unless they came very close). This also allowed the welcome flow of breeze coming in while keeping the hot rays of the sun out and for decorative purposes (Coffman, p. 82).

28 *zuwr*, literally, “to turn aside” (espec. for lodging); “hence to be a foreigner, profane; to commit adultery; come from another man.”

29 She says “love,” but she means “lust.” Love is from heaven; this lust is from hell.

30 *carar*, “to turn away, backsliding, rebellious, revolter.”

31 *praus*, “mild, humble.”

32 David used the same metaphors (smooth mouth, soft words) to describe Ahithophel’s treachery (Psm. 55:21).

33 Harley & Chambers, pp. 28-29.

34 This is a strong word (*phobeo*) which literally means, “to frighten, to be alarmed.” It can mean “to be in awe of, revere.” A husband who feels that his wife looks up to him to this degree will be inoculated against the shallow flattery of a shallow woman.

35 *Ayin* can be translated “eye.”

36 The Bible doesn’t indicate whether Bathsheba deliberately placed herself where the king could see her from his palace, or if she were merely careless. Either way, perhaps things would have read differently if she had kept her body covered or if David had possessed strength enough to avert his eyes.

37 Clarke, pp. 719-720.

38 The word “coverings” occurs again only in Proverbs 31:22. The verb “perfumed” (*nuph*) means “to sprinkle.”

39 “The day appointed” (*kece*) (Prov. 7:20) literally means “the full moon.” Since the full moon festival (Psm. 81:3) is in the middle of the month, he must have left home in the first part of the month for (according to Prov. 7:9) it was dark when she went to seek a lover.

40 “Transgressions” is also translated “treachery” and “faithless.” Men who are unfaithful to their wives are described as “treacherous” (Mal. 2:10; Mal. 2:14-16). The harlot causes her victim to be faithless to God, to his parents, to his wife, to his family, and to himself.

41 Literally, “little man” (*ishon*). This phrase is used five times in the Old Testament and refers to something you “keep your eye on” (i.e., something valuable). It can also refer to the “center” or “core” of something.

42 “Intimate friend”: This word is found only in Ruth 2:1 (cf. also Ruth 3:2) where it denotes kinship.

43 Pregnant girlfriend (or pregnant), friend who got killed because of them, jail, bad car wreck, kicked out of school.

44 “Teachers” (Prov. 5:13) implies that others besides his mother (Prov. 1:9) and father had tried to counsel him.

45 Of course, Paul here is discussing the withholding of fellowship from a sinful brother in the church. Nonetheless, this principle is true in this application. He also acknowledges what we often find to be our situation: we cannot “leave the world,” so

we sometimes have to be near them (1 Cor. 5:10). We honor this principle in that we don't choose to be around them and leave their presence as soon as possible.

46 Black (*ishon*) is literally, "in the center of night."

47 Harley & Chambers, pp. 23, 32.

48 Ibid, pp. 56-57.

49 Ibid, p. 56.

50 In those days, rich men sometimes kept tamed these animals and kept them in their houses for play and diversion. In Arab and Persian poetry, the antelope and the gazelle were often the chosen images of beauty.

51 "The language here is frankly erotic, a rare emphasis in Scripture; but it is highly important to see sexual delight in marriage as a God-given blessing; and history confirms that when marriage is viewed merely as a business arrangement, not only is God's bounty misunderstood, but human passion seeks other outlets" (Coffman, p. 61).

52 Ravished (*shagah*): "to stray; to transgress; by extension (through the idea of intoxication) to reel; be enraptured." "Err thou always in her love. And running waters, which are clear, and sweet, and wholesome, out of thy own well." Tate defined the word "ravished" as "infatuation" and identified it as the "key word in the chapter."

53 These are all metaphors for the wife. The ground of the metaphor is that waters were scarce and precious in those countries; therefore, men made cisterns and wells for their own private use. The same metaphor of waters, and of a pit or well, is applied to things of this nature elsewhere (cf. Prov. 23:27; Isa. 18:1; Isa. 51:1).

54 Williard Harley, Jr., **His Needs, Her Needs: Building An Affair-Proof Marriage** (Fleming H. Revell, 1994), p. 42ff.

55 Our word "adultery" comes from a Latin word meaning, "to another's bed."

56 *eunoia*, "euphemistically, conjugal duty, good will."

57 *sumphonos*, "sounding together (alike), i.e. (fig.) accordant."

58 *akrasia*, "lack of self-restraint; excess."

59 *apostereo*, "destitute, kept back by fraud."

60 Harley, p. 75ff.

61 Perhaps "weekky" should go here if finances and family situation (age of children, babysitting) permit.

62 *chay*, "alive; hence raw (flesh); fresh (plant, water, year); lively."

63 *iyt*, "to swoop down upon."

64 *chamad*, "to delight in, covet, delectable thing."

65 Coffman, p. 86.



About The Author

Native of Alabama. Married to Melissa, 3 children, 1 due in December. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching (Undergraduate and Graduate Diplomas); Freed-Hardeman University (Master of Ministry); Faulkner University (B. A.). Local preaching: AL, MS, TN. Mission Experience: 10 U.S. Campaigns; 5 Foreign Campaigns. Writing Experience: Staff writer, Lambert Book House Editor: *Glad Tidings of Good Things*; *House to House/Heart to Heart*; *HeavenWord*. Author: booklets/tracts. Co-editor: Faulkner University Lectureship Books; Local Preacher, Jacksonville church of Christ, Jacksonville, Alabama since 1995.

CHAPTER 19

The Tongue In Proverbs: How To Use It

Michael Light

Introduction

PROVERBS PROBABLY CONTAINS MORE practical material than any other book in the Bible. The Holy Spirit saw fit to preserve for us, through the pen of Solomon, a plethora of pithy, practical passages. The quality as well as the quantity of wisdom contained in this book makes it an invaluable volume for all who truly seek knowledge. The nature of the writing is helpful in allowing the pearls of wisdom to be remembered. Most of the verses are very short. The truths contained in them are virtually self-evident to all rationally thinking people.

There is no telling how many millions of people over the years have been strengthened and edified through this book's words. The majority of life's difficulties are addressed in the book of Proverbs by the wisest man the world has ever known. A word of caution however, should be given. While Solomon was a wise man, he was not always a faithful man. On many occasions he ignored the very truths set forth in his wisdom literature. He was enticed by, and succumbed to, all manner of temptations. Knowledge of God's will, without a commitment to God, profits nothing.

We need to determine in our own minds that we are not only seeking the truth, but are committed to the

keeping of it. The material contained in Proverbs can improve every one of us, but only if we allow it to do so. The area of emphasis for this study is the tongue and how it is to be used.

Proper Uses Of The Tongue

The Value Of Good Words

The Bible places a premium on the value of good words. We need to stress the difference between good words and smooth words. In this day of political correctness, smooth words are much more prevalent than good words. Smooth words would be saying that which is never offensive or hurtful. But, in truth, good words are sometimes offensive as well as hurtful to one's feelings.

Jesus was constantly getting into trouble for what He said relative to the religious elite of His day. We would all agree (I hope) that Jesus always spoke good words, yet these words were often scathing and challenging to those to whom they were directed. He sometimes spoke of men being wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15), hypocrites (Matt. 23:13), blind guides (Matt. 23:16), fools (Matt. 23:17), serpents (Matt. 23:33), and children of Satan (John 8:40-44). These words were hard, but they were good, because they were true.

The great book of Proverbs also draws a line of distinction between flattering lips and lips that speak good words. One of the reasons that good words (words of truth) are so valuable is the fact that eternal life is tied to our hearing, believing, and acting in accordance with them (John 8:32).

In Proverbs 10:11 we read, "The mouth of the righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked" (cf. Prov. 13:2). In a day and age when water was scarce, the image of a well captured in a beautiful fashion

the value God placed on the words of the righteous (Prov. 18:4). The words of truth are life-giving and sustaining. Solomon recognized this fact and desired for the rest of us to know it as well.

Later, in Proverbs 10:20, we find, “The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.” This passage sets out another truth that needs to be stressed in our day. All words are not of the same worth, and all views are not equally valid. Many become livid at the mere suggestion that their opinion is not as valuable as another, but such is certainly the case. Only truth validates a man’s speech.

The wise man again avers in Proverbs 15:4, “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.” The allusion to a tree of life adds to the earlier imagery of the well. The picture here magnifies the idea of truth in one’s speech being a preserving and sustaining element. There is also a reiteration that some speech is indeed perverse.

Discovering what is truly valuable is one of the greatest adventures in life. Christ discussed this in His first recorded sermon (Matt. 6:19-21). Solomon plainly states, “There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel” (Prov. 20:15). He is actually saying that truth in speech is rarer than jewels. He speaks of gold and rubies as being commonplace, but the truly rare jewel is lips of knowledge.

Finally, in Proverbs 25:11 we read, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Brother Leroy Brownlow has written a book entitled **Apples Of Gold** from this very passage. One of the greatest challenges set before Christians is learning what to say and how to say it. Oftentimes in Bible studies or in sermons, we struggle in the attempt to speak the truth in a fashion that will assist the hearer in grasping the point.

At funerals and in hospitals, the words of comfort sometimes seem to ring hollow, and we then realize the truthfulness of this passage. We desire the ability to speak words that are fit for the occasion. And when we do, this passage helps us realize the value of such efforts from heaven's point of view.

The Tongue Delivers The Just From Problems

Our speech also has a direct impact on the number of difficulties we have in this life. While, truly, many things just happen to us in life, it is equally true that we bring many problems on ourselves. While space will not allow a history of every occasion in my life when I have put my foot in my mouth, trust my saying that the list would be long. Sometimes these ill-spoken words have minor consequences, and sometimes they have more serious ones.

Notice the words recorded for us in Proverbs 12:6: "The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them." Truth fitly spoken can deliver us from difficult situations. On more than one occasion, the apostle Paul was able to talk himself out of trouble. He certainly did not compromise nor alter the truth, but he did use wisdom in his speech to turn bad situations into better ones (Acts 22-23). Brethren, we do need to be circumspect in our choice of words. I know that people often reject the truth because they disagree with the message. But it is also true that the truth can suffer due to the manner in which it is presented.

In Proverbs 12:13 we read, "The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble." When we are faithful to God in the usage of our tongue, we avoid a host of problems. Just a few months ago we witnessed Trent Lott's debacle. I do not know the man. I do not know what he thinks relative to the race issue. But I do know that running his mouth and choosing

poor words resulted in his losing his position as majority leader in the United States Senate, and in the upcoming election this incident could cost him his seat. The point is that our words do matter, and we can set many snares into which we may fall if we are not careful.

Our final passage on this point is found in Proverbs 15:1: “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” This is one of the better-known passages dealing with this subject. We can defuse many situations if we will. We don’t always have to have the last word. We don’t always have to put people in their place. But oftentimes we do just that, in direct violation of the spirit of this passage. Jerry Clower (deceased country comic) used to say, “You better keep your words soft and sweet, because you never know when you will be forced to eat them.” That is not bad advice.

The Tongue Brings Health And Happiness

The Holy Spirit repeatedly ties the promise of blessing to those who control their tongues. In Proverbs 12:18 we are told, “There is that speaketh like the piercing of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.” In this verse we again find the prohibition against cutting people down. One-up-man-ship is not an essential for happy living. In fact, it will go a long way in preventing contentment and joy in our lives. The second phrase recognizes health as a gift to those with wise tongues. Of course, this is a general truth. Solomon is not affirming that the wise man will never have any health trouble.

Proverbs 12:25 adds, “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.” Our emotional and spiritual health is tied to the words contained in our heart. Many people are consumed by guilt and shame over words spoken and deeds committed relative to a disregarding of God’s will concerning their

tongue. There are a gladness and inner peace that come to the person who knows he is walking in harmony with the Word of God (Phil. 4:7).

In Proverbs 15:23 we find, "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!" There is joy in knowing that we have spoken the truth. There is joy when one receives the truth that we speak. There is joy in knowing that our heavenly Father smiles upon our faithfulness, even when those around us do not. And truly this is good. Later, the king of Israel adds, "Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things" (Prov. 23:16).

Another poetic picture is painted for us in Proverbs 27:9: "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." Friends, we need to realize the tremendous value of encouraging words. All of us enjoy receiving compliments. Let us work at ensuring that we give them as readily as we receive them. We should encourage our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We should uplift our children and help them reach for new heights. We should commend non-members who are seeking the truth and do all we can to help them find it.

The Tongue Is To Spread The Truth

Most of the six billion people who dwell on this planet are not saved. We should commit ourselves to doing everything in our power to carry the Gospel to them. This includes much more than simply sending money to missionaries. We must be willing to use the talents that God has given us personally to contact and teach those around us.

In Proverbs 10:32 we learn, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable:" and Proverbs 12:6 declares that "the mouth of the upright shall deliver them." We who

know the truth must realize that not everyone does. They must be taught the truth (Rom. 10:10ff). Notice also Proverbs 15:2: “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.” We are to use the knowledge we have. Gaining knowledge is wonderful and essential, but not transferring it to others is a travesty and a sin (Jas. 4:17). We also must be unyielding in our presentation of the truth in order to counteract the persistent dissemination of error.

Later, in Proverbs 15:7 the Scriptures teach, “The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.” Tie this with Proverbs 24:26: “Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer,” and Proverbs 28:23, “He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.” Putting the force of these passages together shows us something of God’s view of speaking the truth.

It is better to tell someone the truth than to misguide them. Much preaching today is so general and generic that the listener is hard-pressed to know what to think. There is not much in the way of instruction from the Book of books. Proverbs 28:23 specifically charges us with the obligation to rebuke those who are in error. We are not to flatter them (i.e., leave the impression that they are okay when such is not the case). The effect of such ungodly action is the same as lying.

The Tongue Can Determine Our Harvest

In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding. Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction (Prov. 10:13-14).

The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out (Prov. 10:31).

We must gain wisdom if we are going to receive a reward from our heavenly Father. Likewise, a failure to do so will doom us to eternal punishment. Many will forfeit the glory of heaven simply because they are too lazy to put forth the effort required to acquire the truth.

Later, in Proverbs 12:14 we are told, “A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompense of a man’s hands shall be rendered unto him.” This passage is similar in force with what Paul taught concerning sowing and reaping in Galatians 6:7-8. We are going to receive based on what we have given. If we are faithful to God, He will bless us beyond our grandest imaginations. If we fail to render to God what is due Him, then a gloomy fate awaits.

Similarly, Proverbs 13:2 states, “A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.” God wants what is best for us, but He does allow us the choice. If we insist on ignoring His Word and will, trouble will follow. In Proverbs 18:20-21 we read: “A man’s belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled. Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” This is a sobering passage. The idea of death and life being in our own hands is almost overwhelming. It has been said that God is for us, Satan is against us, and we cast the deciding vote.

In Proverbs 22:11 Solomon taught, “He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.” As mentioned earlier there are many things in this life worth more than gold and jewels. The king in this passage recognizes this truth and desires to befriend the man who has pureness of heart and grace of lips.

Look next to Proverbs 25:15, which adds, “By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.” Most of us could probably learn a

lesson from this passage. We need to be patient with people. Sometime it is sickening to watch how brethren treat one another. Even among faithful men there is sometimes a great shortage of forbearance. It is neither right nor Christian to abandon this virtue.

God's View Of The Tongue

One principle that needs never to be overlooked is that God sees things differently than we do (Isa. 55:8-9). To begin with, He is not limited as we are. This is true in dealing with the tongue as well. In Proverbs 15:26 we find, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words." God knows our thoughts and our words. Jesus later taught that our justification or damnation is, in part, based on our words (Matt. 12:36-37). The words we speak are of utmost importance.

Proverbs 16:24 states, "Pleasant words are as honeycombs, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." Later, in Proverbs 25:25 Solomon adds, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." God again paints a beautiful picture of the simple goodness that can be had by controlling one's speech. Friends, we can be the type of person who illuminates a room by our presence, or that person others hate to see coming, based on our speech.

Conclusion

How often we forfeit the peace of heart and tranquility of life because we refuse to bridle our tongues! May God help us take a more serious look at the manner in which we use our tongues. And may we have the personal commitment to God to better our efforts in this area.



About The Author

Native of Texas. Married to Carrie (Brown), 3 children. Graduate: Southwest Texas State University (B. A., M. A.). Campaigns: England, Jamaica, Russia. Director: two Christian camps. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Editor: *Seek Ye First*; Assistant Editor: *Contending For The Faith*. Local preaching, Bangs, TX past seven years.

CHAPTER 20

The Tongue In Proverbs: How Not To Use It

Barry Gilreath, Jr.

Introduction

PROVERBS IS A COLLECTION of wise sayings. Jehovah provided man with these inspired words for mankind's benefit in attaining wisdom (Prov. 1:1-5). Wisdom should be desired and sought above any worldly possession. Only the fool will despise wisdom from above (Prov. 23:9). Solomon chose prudently when he asked God for wisdom (1 Kings 3:3-10). Yet Divine wisdom is available to all who would seek it (Jas. 1:5).

The structure of the book of Proverbs is best described as a collection of wise sayings. The penman for the book did not attempt to group the Proverbs topically; thus the subject matter can vary from verse to verse. For the purpose of this lecture we will examine the sayings in the book that are related to the tongue. Specifically, we will note what the Proverbs writer says regarding the improper use of it.

In the New Testament, James, the half-brother of the Lord, addressed the great potential for destruction that the tongue possesses (Jas. 3). Peter also discouraged Christians from using their tongue for evil purposes (1 Pet. 3:10). We are probably familiar with these and other New Testament passages related to the tongue. However,

within Proverbs, there are also a number of valuable passages that instruct and advise man in the use of his tongue.

A Wise Man Will Not Use His Tongue To Lie

Proverbs addresses the subject of lying. Lying is a serious problem that plagues man. It rears its ugly head in many forms. Man attempts to dress lying up by re-labeling it with softer terms. Some speak of little white lies, fudging, twisting the truth, bending the truth, flattery (Prov. 26:28; Prov. 29:5), and by other terms. Dress it up as you please. Call it what you may, but lying is still an ugly sin.

Lying manifests itself in the very young who may lie to their parents to avoid the consequences of some action, or by the very old who may lie on their income taxes to avoid tax liability. It is practiced by the very poor who may lie about their attainments to help secure some job applied for, or it is observed by the very rich and powerful who may lie to avoid some corporate scandal. Yes, lying is a very serious problem today, yet lying is not just a problem for modern man. Lying and its consequences have plagued man from the beginning of time. Satan lied to man and helped to bring about the alienation of man from God (Gen. 2:7). Cain lied to God by providing a vague response, attempting to deceive, to the question of, "Where is Abel thy brother?" (Gen. 4:9). The murder of his brother, coupled with his lying, brought stern punishment upon him.

Others have also fallen prey to lying. Saul lied to the prophet when Samuel inquired of the completion of the task of destroying the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:13-14). Saul's disobedience and attempts at hiding the truth resulted in his rejection by God as the king of Israel. Lying is a sin that affects all ages, races, cultures, and times.

Due to its great impact upon man and the ultimate consequences for such behavior (Rev. 21:8), it is only appropriate that such subject matter would be addressed in the collection of Wisdom Literature. Man certainly needs Divine instruction to guide him in this potential problem area of the tongue.

Proverbs makes a strong declaration regarding Jehovah and the act of lying. God hates the act of lying (Prov. 6:17). It cannot be presented any clearer. In fact, the Proverbs writer wrote, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight" (Prov. 12:22). We do not often associate God with hatred or such strong emotions as abomination, yet lying is an act man commits that actually stirs up these emotions in the heart of Deity. Such a response is necessary, due to the fact that lying is contrary to the nature of God (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). When one engages in the sin of lying, one manifests to the Lord and others a spirit of unrighteousness (Prov. 6:12). For "He that speaketh the truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit" (Prov. 12:17).

The pursuit of truth is contrary to the "wisdom of the world." The world promotes lying as a "fix-all" for man's problems. Those who pursue the liar's covenant believe that, if one finds himself in a situation that is undesirable, just lie. Cain, Saul, and perhaps most of mankind has at one time or another pursued such a foolish course of action. However, in contrast, God teaches us to rely upon truth at every turn in life. We are commanded to love the truth (Zech. 8:19). We are told to purchase the truth and not to sell it for any price (Prov. 23:23).

Yet when man pursues lies to fix the problems of life, great consequences are suffered in the process. Liars tend to minimize any possibility of consequences for lying, yet these consequences are suffered time and time again. One problem with liars is that they tend to believe the

Devil's lie that falsehood offers a permanent fix to the problems that trouble them. However, lying is at best only a temporary solution. God says, "The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment" (Prov 12:19). Consider the example of former President Clinton, who lied about his scandalous relationship with a young intern. Though he certainly wasn't the only President ever to lie, his poor example of trying to fix his problem by lying illustrates the proverbial truth. It was only a matter of time or "a moment" until his lying was discovered, and the lies uttered brought even greater embarrassment and shame upon him than if he had simply told the truth when initially confronted. Truly, a "fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul" (Prov. 18:6-7).

Thus one who practices lying demonstrates foolishness. Lying is foolish for a number of reasons. **First, it is foolish because it puts off the inevitable.** It discounts the fact that there will be a day of reckoning (Prov. 19:5-9). It ignores the fact that the dishonest pursuit of some "treasure" will only result in a great calamity in the end (Prov. 21:6). This is one reason the Proverbs writer affirmed that it is better to be a poor man and maintain integrity than to pursue something of the world, and to do such through deceit (Prov. 19:1). There are great consequences to be suffered in such a pursuit.

Second, lying is foolish because the pursuit of lies will often lead to the commission of other sins. Rarely will one only commit a single sin in lying. Listen to the proverbial wisdom: "He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief" (Prov 17:20). Mischief of all sorts follows the liar. One who lies often finds himself engaging in other sins in order to preserve the original lie that was told. Sometimes the mischief following a lie can even involve

the telling of other lies. Sometimes it may involve the commission of other grievous transgressions. Sapphira and her husband, Ananias, insinuated that their gift to the church was the entire amount that they had received from the sale of some property. That was a lie. They only gave a portion of the funds received from the sale. When the apostles inquired further about the amount given, Sapphira found herself telling a lie to preserve their original deceit (Acts 5:1-9).

Such an example illustrates the truth that lies often lead to other lies. Saul lied when he said he had utterly destroyed the Amalekites, and, when confronted with his sin, he added unto it by expanding the deceit (1 Sam. 15).

Third, when one lies, one will attract the wrong kind of people. A liar will attract worldly companions: “A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue” (Prov. 17:4). It is unreasonable to believe that one can practice evil and attract wholesome people as companions (Prov. 17:7). Good people do not want to be companions with liars. There is too much at stake. A liar is not trustworthy. He cannot be depended upon in a time of need (Prov. 14:25).

Thus, one who chooses to lie will find that his circle of friends will be composed of those who are morally bankrupt, the kind of “friends” that the prodigal son found while engaging in riotous living (Prov. 24:1-2). These kinds of “friends” are nowhere to be found when one finds himself in desperate need. Such “friends” become thorns of pain, and destructive agents in our lives.

As the Proverbs writer penned, “A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow” (Prov. 25:18).

A Wise Man Will Not Use His Tongue In Boasting

In addition to lying, Proverbs exhorts us to pursue wisdom by restraining our tongue from boasting. Boasting is a sin because it originates from a heart of pride (Prov. 14:3). The folly of boasting is seen in several ways. **First, it is foolish to boast because the one who boasts often makes assertions that he cannot back up.** Within a boast, there is the assumption that we have complete control over the matter under consideration. Such is the furthest from the truth: “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1). One who boasts often presents a lot of clouds and wind, but he cannot produce the rain that he promised (Prov. 25:14).

Second, it is foolish to boast because boasting brings about troubles: “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23). Nebuchadnezzar boasted, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30). His boasting led to great troubles in his life.

Yet even apart from the Divine punishment, troubles are the natural results of boasting. A baseball player who boasts of what he will do during the upcoming season must produce or else be troubled throughout the season by fans and sportswriters who remind him of his boast. A salesman who boasts of his great sales ability during good times may find himself eating his words when the economy becomes sluggish and begins to slow down. Perhaps his success was not so much due to his sales savvy but was that he had a great product to sell or that there was great demand for his merchandise (Isa. 10:15). Boasting often brings about vexation of the soul and multitudes of troubles.

Third, boasting can even bring about our utter destruction. Proverbs 13:3 can be applied to many areas of the tongue, but certainly does it apply to the one who would boast: “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.” One who boasts often sets himself up for a great fall and destruction. Was it not Saddam Hussein who promised the mother of all battles during the first Gulf War, and yet he suffered the mother of all defeats? Such was also the case with Edom (Obad. 3-5). Edom boasted that she was untouchable in her high and lofty cliffs. However, God promised that she would be brought down to utter destruction. His illustration of grape gatherers is pointed. Even those who pick grapes will leave a few behind on the vines, but God would leave no “grape” behind when he began his punishment of this boastful nation. Yes, boasting can even lead to our utter destruction.

A Wise Man Will Not Use His Tongue For Angry Speech

Though anger is not a sin in and of itself (Eph. 4:26), it can certainly lead us into sin if it is not controlled. The Proverbs writer offers advice for channeling our tongue when angry. **First, *before* you speak, study the situation carefully (Prov. 15:28):** “Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov. 29:20). Sometimes sins of the tongue are committed because we speak before we give adequate consideration to a situation (Prov. 18:13). James wrote, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:19-20). Before we begin to address issues in anger, we should spend time pondering and considering the proper response and message we want to deliver. We should filter our

response through the sieve of Proverbs 15:1, which says, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” Otherwise, we may find that anger gets the best of us and causes us to say or do something that we later regret.

Second, consider that there are times in which we can speak through other means than with our tongue. The Proverbs writer encouraged us in times such as these to rely upon our countenance more than our vocabulary: “The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue” (Prov. 25:23). Often man, in the heat of discussion, will say something he might later regret. Therefore, if possible, we should heed the inspired proverb and handle these situations with few words (Prov. 17:27). We should let our countenance speak for us. Jesus demonstrated this approach after some began to look critically upon His actions in Mark 3:1-5. He spoke very few words to His critics on this occasion, but His look of anger was enough to get His point across. When in similar situations, we would do well to follow the Master’s example and speak more with our countenance than with our tongue.

Third, we should remember that there will be times in which it is good not to speak at all, at least for a while: “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards” (Prov. 29:11; cf. Prov. 12:23). In times of extreme emotional or physical distress, it can be good not to say anything at that particular moment, due to our weakness: “Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding” (Prov. 17:28). This does not mean that there would never be a time when an important matter could be addressed in the future. Certainly, if it is an important matter, it must be addressed, but we must remember the words of the wise man Solomon, who wrote that there is a time to “keep silence, and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:7).

A Wise Man Will Not Use His Tongue To Gossip

One who engages in gossip demonstrates foolishness and a lack of wisdom. Gossip is a destructive activity of the tongue. It is hurtful to the body of Christ (Prov. 26:22): “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (Prov. 18:8). One who gossips is described as hating his fellow man (Prov. 26:24-26). One cannot engage in gossip and, at the same time, manifest a spirit of love. Gossip and love are contrary to one another.

The gossip is referred to as a hypocrite who destroys with his mouth (Prov. 11:9). His activities are compared to a potsherd covered with silver dross (Prov. 26:23). A potsherd is a broken piece of pottery. Silver dross is the residue of silver after it has been refined. Both the potsherd and silver dross have no value. They are discarded with the garbage. Their comparison to gossip is clear. Gossip has no value whatsoever. It should be discarded just as the potsherd or silver dross.

One who gossips is described as hypocritical, in that he professes to be a follower of Jehovah, yet his actions prove otherwise (Prov. 11:9). He is therefore two-faced. A gossip will often flatter you to your face, and then destroy your good name behind your back. We are told not to “meddle” with this type of person (Prov. 20:19). He cannot be trusted with sensitive information (Prov. 11:13). He will promise confidence in a matter and then eagerly parade that information to anyone who will give him ear.

The advice of the Proverbs writer to avoid gossip is threefold. **First, “Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself” (Prov. 25:9).** In other words, if you have a problem with a brother, go to him and him alone. Is this not also what our Lord taught in the Gospels (Matt. 18:15)? There is great wisdom in such an approach.

Miscommunication can be cleared up. Facts can be verified and clarified, and opportunity for reconciliation is provided.

Second, “discover not a secret to another” (Prov. 25:9). In other words, do not become a gossiper, lest the one you are gossiping about expose you for what you are (Prov. 25:10). Certainly, there is a time that others might need to be aware of a situation in order to correct it Biblically (Matt. 18:16-17). When the proper Biblical course of action is followed, gossip is not the result. However, many situations can be solved without the involvement of others, if we would only heed the inspired advice.

Third, don’t become a conduit for the gossip of others: “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife” (Prov. 26:20-21). In other words, gossip would not exist if it were not for those who listen to the gossiper. Do not be a partaker in other men’s evil deeds (2 John 11). Do not feel that you must be polite and listen to gossip. Have the courage to stop gossip in its tracks. Passive participation will only fuel the gossiper’s raging fire. One cannot claim to be neutral and listen to gossip. One becomes a participant.

Conclusion

The Proverbs offer us excellent instruction and Divine guidance in the use of our tongues. One who pursues God’s wisdom will refrain from using his tongue for ungodly purposes. He will trust in the Lord and pursue the paths of righteousness as revealed in the Word of God.

A wise man will not use his tongue to lie. A wise man will not use his tongue to boast, neither for angry speech or gossip. Wise men and women will heed Divine instruction and avoid the improper use of the tongue.



About The Author

Native of Tennessee. Married to Jodi (Little), 4 children. Graduate: Southern Christian University (B. A.); East Tennessee School of Preaching; Memphis School of Preaching. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Director: North Georgia Winter Lectures. Local Preaching: MS, TN, GA. Former Associate Minister at Southaven church of Christ. Local preacher, Highland church of Christ, Dalton, GA since 1997.

CHAPTER 21

Anger In Proverbs

Don Walker

Introduction

WHEN ONE OPENS THE book of Proverbs and begins studying, he sees very quickly a book that is written from a father to his son. Steve Lloyd wrote:

Augustine of Hippo wrote a letter containing instructions to his son on how to live wisely. It is titled, **Enchiridion**. Others have written similar treatises to their sons. A student of Epictetus reflecting the latter's sentiments compiled a book bearing the same title. Epictetus was a philosopher of the 1st and 2nd century. The reason these works all bear the same title is because an enchiridion is a treatise written to one's child on living wisely. The Old Testament book of **Proverbs** is an enchiridion.¹

Solomon writes:

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live (Prov. 4:1-4).

Solomon addressed a broad array of topics as he instructed his son on the wise course to pursue. Ken

Hope writes concerning Proverbs these powerful words:

Without a doubt, the goal of Proverbs is to inspire young men and ladies unto purity (Prov. 20:11), integrity (Prov. 20:7), and industry (Prov. 18:9). It begins with the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7), precisely where the book of Ecclesiastes ends (Eccl. 12:13). Within its pages we find a spiritual workshop that both educates and encourages us to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Tit. 2:10).²

Solomon’s exhortations cover all that a son or daughter would do—in actions, speech, and even thoughts. In so doing, he does not fail to introduce and expound even upon the emotions of those receiving these Proverbs.

Anger In General

One of the strongest emotions men possess is the emotion of “anger.” Not only is anger a strong emotion, but also a Biblical study of “anger” is an interesting study that takes many twists and turns through the pages of Scripture.

For an example of the different twists, let’s take a moment to consider Jonah 4. Jonah was commanded to go to Nineveh to preach. Because of Jonah’s reluctance, Jehovah was moved to persuade him, and that He did. Finally, Jonah did that which he was originally commanded. He went to Nineveh and preached the preaching which God did bid.

When Jonah saw that the Lord had repented and spared Nineveh, he was “exceedingly displeased” and “very angry” (Jonah 4:1). Further study in Jonah 4 tells us it was God’s grace and mercy and the fact that He is slow to anger and of great kindness that frustrated and angered Jonah (Jonah 4:2). Jonah would have rather been dead (Jonah 4:3). Then the Lord asked Jonah, “Doest thou well to be angry?” In the next verses, Jehovah prepared a gourd,

which pleased Jonah exceedingly. He also prepared a worm, which “smote the gourd that it withered” (Jonah 4:7). Finally, it says, “God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live” (Jonah 4:8). In Jonah 4:9 we see again the question from Jehovah, “Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said I do well to be angry, even unto death” (Jonah 4:9). The book ends with the following two verses.

Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle? (Jonah 4:10-11).

As we consider Jonah 4 closely, we must be impressed with how much anger is discussed and the broad panoramic approach. First, we see Jonah was very angry when Nineveh was spared. Next, we learn that our God was slow to anger. Third, Jehovah questioned Jonah’s first anger. However, that is not the end of the study. We see that Jonah became angry again when the gourd withered and his shade was removed. Jehovah again questioned Jonah’s anger. Lastly, Jonah declared, “I do well to be angry, even unto death” (Jonah 4:9). What a sad, sad commentary! Jonah was angry when the gourd tree was destroyed, and yet he showed no concern for the lost of Nineveh.

Now in this short section of Scripture, we see Jonah’s anger spoken of in a negative light, and most if not all would conclude rightly so. Yet before we can draw the conclusion that anger is wrong, we see the statement, “God is slow to anger.” It does not say that God is never angry, but it implies that there are times when even God is angry.

Anger—Right Or Wrong?

If Jonah and his attitude were all we had to go by, it would be easy to conclude that it is wrong to be angry. In fact, there are those even in the Lord's church who would say that it is wrong to be angry, period.

It is true that there are passages which show those who are angry when they should not have been angry. Jonah most certainly was wrong in not only being angry, but also in his assumption that his anger was truly warranted and should have been acceptable. We find another good example where anger was completely out of place in Luke 15. When the prodigal son returned, the father rejoiced and threw a big party. Of the older son, Luke 15:28 reads, "And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him." In this passage we see the father questioning the anger of **his** son much like Jehovah questioned the anger of Jonah. The point here, however, is that the older brother's anger was **most** inappropriate.

Yet in this we have only learned that there are some situations where we do well to squelch this rawest emotion. For, as we have already seen, there are times when anger is certainly warranted, and most God-like. Consider the following thoughts, which indicate that there is most definitely a time for, at the least, guarded anger. In Psalm 7:11 we read, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is **angry** with the wicked every day" (emp. mine throughout, DW). Again the Psalmist records, "For his anger endureth but a moment" (Psm. 30:5).

Our God may be slow to anger, and His anger may be short-lived, but that does not mean that He is never angry. When Jesus, the Son of God, Who is Deity Himself, was grieved with the hardness of the people's heart, the Bible says that He "looked round about on them with anger" (Mark 3:5). Knowing that Jesus "was in all points

tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15), and that He serves as the perfect High Priest because “He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Pet. 2:22) shows us that anger is not always wrong. Even in the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus warned against anger, he qualified the statement in this way: “whosoever is angry with his brother **without a cause**” (Matt. 5:22). Seeing these passages reminds us that not all anger is wrong. So we have seen that anger is, to some degree at least, a neutral emotion; we must take into consideration the surroundings and conditions that prompted the anger before we draw a conclusion whether it was right or wrong.

Anger And The Proverbs

When we turn our attention to Proverbs concerning our study, we see the same points stressed. For example, let’s note just a few of the passages from Proverbs at this time:

He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated (Prov. 14:17).

It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman (Prov. 21:19).

Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go (Prov. 22:24).

An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression (Prov. 29:22).

When we consider the general focus of these four passages, we could very well conclude that anger is an emotion that we should avoid completely. With the exception of Proverbs 14:17, where the writer qualifies the anger, “He that is **soon** angry,” we get the idea it is a negative in our lives that will simply be punished.

However, we cannot overlook the inspired qualifiers that the wise man reveals in the Proverbs. We must not

be hasty to conclude that all anger is wrong. Along with Proverbs 14:17, let's consider other passages:

He that is **slow** to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly (Prov. 14:29).

A wrathful man stirreth up strife; but he that is **slow** to anger appeaseth strife (Prov. 15:18).

He that is **slow** to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city (Prov. 16:32).

In these four passages, we see that being angry, even though Solomon qualifies it, is not wrong. In fact, the ability to control our anger shows great understanding and power (Prov. 19:11). These passages do not forbid our anger, but rather legislate it in such a way as to be a benefit for men. This qualifier does not surprise us when we consider the earlier passages which showed our Father and His Son Jesus Christ being angry.

So, now, our understanding of what is taught concerning anger has increased. Anger can be wrong if it is always on the surface of the individual just waiting to pounce, lashing out with no restraint. On the other hand, when anger is slow in coming and is bridled, it can show great understanding, power, and spiritual maturity.

Anger's Destructive Power

In Proverbs, **anger** is addressed extensively. On this topic, one of Solomon's prominent points is its destructive nature. In a man's life, when anger controls him rather than his controlling his anger, he exalteth folly (Prov. 14:29), and is numbered among the fools (Prov. 14:17).

In Proverbs 15:18, Solomon wrote, "A wrathful man stirreth up strife; but he that is slow to anger appeaseth

strife.” Derek Kidner comments, “quarrels depend on people far more than subject matter.”³ In the New Testament passages that deal with the topic of unity, the writers often address the attitudes of the brethren that must be present to maintain a working, practical unity in the church. In Ephesians 4, before Paul addressed the seven ones, he wrote, “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2-3). The same is true in Philippians 2:1-4:

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Now notice particularly Philippians 2:3: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.” How, if what Solomon says is true, can a man who is wrathful accomplish this? Again, when we consider the works of the flesh, we note that Paul adds to this most infamous list “wrath, strife, seditions, heresies” (Gal. 5:20). With the conflicts that arise among God’s people, we can understand the great value of men being slow to anger. Yet when men are known as “wrathful men,” we can predict with a great degree of accuracy the end result of strife. Anger is a destructive force which can lead to heartache and division: “A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool’s wrath is heavier than them both. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?” (Prov. 27:3-4).

Solomon wrote, “A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it

again” (Prov. 19:19). Sooner or later, when a man’s constitution is one of unbridled anger, he can expect it to lead to conduct that will deserve and demand punishment: “Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife” (Prov. 30:33).

It is simply the natural course of things. Anger, when not kept in check, will lead one to destruction.

Anger And Transgression

We have already noted that anger is a neutral emotion. That is, anger can be right, and anger can be wrong. Yet we have also seen that anger is a very intense emotion, which can be very volatile. Paul’s statement in Ephesians 4:26 is easily understood, but stands as a great challenge for those who wish to obey it. He wrote, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” The wise man will understand just how easy it is for sins to multiply when he is angry. Solomon said, “An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression” (Prov. 29:22).

It is easy, if we are not careful, to be angry for the wrong reasons. Jonah was angered because of his enemies’ good fortune. When we consider Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:43-47), we realize that Jonah’s anger was neither warranted, nor was it right. His anger was motivated by a sinful attitude. In Luke 15, the older brother’s anger was motivated out of envy and jealousy. With neither of these being a proper motivation, we must understand that anger derived from such would not be proper, either. Too often, our anger is motivated by jealousy or selfishness, rather than righteous indignation. Sinful attitudes which motivate our anger are just one area in which sin can be multiplied in our anger.

How one responds to anger must be a constant concern for the righteous. There is no honor in being angry

for the proper reason if we respond in a sinful way. The truth is that there are some things in our society that should truly anger us. Consider the multitudes of innocent infants who die, because of a hard-hearted mother, at the hands of murderous abortion doctors. This should anger righteous men who believe life is in the hands of our God. Anger would not be out of place here. Yet if my response is to bomb the clinic or murder the participants, then I have added sin to my anger. So if we are not careful as children of God, we could very well allow our anger to become a seedbed for sin.

Another consideration, on a slightly different note, is whether I do get angry when the situation demands it. We have noted, "God is angry with the wicked everyday" (Psm. 7:11), and that Jesus was also angry while here on earth (Mark 3:5). From this we can conclude that there are appropriate situations when anger should be possessed. For example, consider the constant bombardment we face in our nation from the homosexual movement and its agenda. If this does not anger you, then something must be wrong. It should sicken and anger the children of God that such wickedness has been allowed a sanctuary in our nation. There are some situations that anger that warrant anger, and the child of God should arise in anger. Certainly, great care should be constant when we are angry, that we do not respond in a sinful way, but anger, at times, is necessary.

Now, lets take a few moments to summarize what we have learned thus far. We have seen that anger is neither right nor wrong within itself. There are times and situations when anger is completely out of line and is a transgression if we continue in it. We have also learned that there is a time and a place for anger. However, we learn that we should be slow to anger. To allow our anger to stir up swiftly aligns us with the fools: "**He that is**

soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated (Prov. 14:17). Again, the sentiment is expressed in Proverbs 14:29: “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: **but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.**” Our anger must be well guarded lest we fail to heed the apostle’s admonition, “Be ye angry and sin not.”

Self-Control, Temperance, And Anger

Of course, we must understand the necessity of self-control and temperance when it comes to anger. Consider for a moment how often the inspired writers admonish and exhort that we be men who possess ourselves so that we might be the people who bring glory to our God. When Paul stood before Felix, the Bible says that he “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). **Righteousness**—the commandments of God are righteousness (Psm. 119:172). Paul’s point was that there is an objective standard by which we must direct our steps. This standard, given by God, instructs us on anger also. **Temperance**—we are responsible for bringing our lives into subjection to that which has been revealed.

God’s Word tells us that we must not be swift to anger or wrath, but, quite the contrary, it tells us that we must be “slow to anger.” James said, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19). Now Felix was, as well as all men, responsible for putting the boundaries on his life that God legislated. **Judgment to come**—the reason we must know and follow God’s Word is that we will each one give an account of ourselves to God.

All of this is true concerning our anger. We must turn to God’s Word and learn. We must apply in a practical way what we learn because, one day, we will give an account before God.

It would be hard to over-emphasize the import of temperance and self-control when it comes to anger in our lives. When Paul revealed the fruit of the Spirit he wrote, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”** (Gal. 5:22-23). When Peter outlined the spiritual growth that is so necessary in 2 Peter 1, He said we must give all diligence to add “to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness” (2 Pet. 1:6).

Anger And The Tongue

One of the major themes in Proverbs is the use of the tongue. It is a topic that most certainly will be explored in greater detail in other chapters of this book. However, we would do well to consider briefly anger and the tongue.

Solomon wrote that there is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak. It is the wise man who can distinguish the difference. In the book of James, which has been described as the Proverbs of the New Testament, James addresses the topic. James wrote, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19). Again we read, “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (Jas. 3:2). In our attempt to control our anger, we will serve ourselves well if we learn how to bridle our tongue. Paul showed the close relationship between anger and the tongue when he wrote to the Ephesians, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31). In the progression of things, bitterness, wrath, and anger boil forth into “clamour and evil speaking.” If we are able to control our anger, we will be able to avoid these sins of the tongue.

Dealing With Angry Men

Before we bring our study to a close, we need to look at anger from a little different perspective. Much energy must go into regulating our own anger. But just as valuable is learning how we can deal with those who are angry. Solomon does not leave us out in the cold concerning this matter. Our first rule to note is that we should avoid angry men if possible. Solomon wrote, "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul" (Prov. 22:24-25). We can see that the wise man's statement is based on another Biblical principle of which Paul spoke to the Corinthians: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). We have already noticed the troubles that follow the angry man. If we continually associate with such, we can expect to share the same troubles and tribulations.

Yet, as diligent as we may be to apply the first rule mentioned above, there will be times when we simply have no choice but to deal with those who are angry. Paul wrote, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). As much as we may try to avoid angry men, there will be times when it will simply be impossible. How should we respond?

A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath (Prov. 21:14).

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger (Prov. 15:1).

The thought expressed in these two passages is a valid principle stressed throughout Scripture. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught:

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the

judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing (Matt. 5:25-26).

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away (Matt. 5:38-42).

We are well aware that these passages do not deal directly with angry men, but we do see a principle that will assist us in our dealing with angry men. It is a response that is not only unexpected, but it is also disarming. Commenting on Proverbs 21:14, Billy Balke wrote:

Verse 14: The soft answer turns aside wrath (Prov. 15:1), and doing good overcomes evil (Rom. 12:19-21). Jacob sought to pacify Esau with gifts (Gen. 32-33), and Toi, king of Harnath, saluted David with gifts, for David had smitten the host of Hadadezer, their mutual enemy (2 Sam. 8:9-11) and, by rewarding David, sought to stay David's wrath.⁴

If we follow the example of our Lord, we will go a long way in disarming those volatile situations that may arise when we have to deal with those who are of an angry countenance.

Conclusion

The Wise Man And Anger

The wise man will not be easily angered. Solomon proclaimed the benefits for those who were slow to anger. They are "of great understanding," able to "appease strife,"

and are “better than the mighty.” The wise man will be able to be angry without committing sin. The trivial matters that so often anger other men will not stir the wise men to anger. His anger will be reserved for those matters that are worthy of the righteous man’s anger. And when he is angry, he will maintain control, lest he allow his anger to cause him to transgress God’s law.

The Foolish Man And Anger

The foolish man’s anger will reside on the surface and will ever be apt to come boiling forth. It will pounce with great swiftness and fierceness. Because the foolish man has no control, his actions, which are produced by the anger, will oftentimes be sinful. He will find himself, because of his anger, suffering punishment and, though he be delivered, he will not learn, and again will need deliverance. The foolish man who has an anger problem will also find that wise men will avoid him.

Christians Beware And Be In Control

As children of God, we will be expected to control our anger. There will be times when we must not allow our anger to arise, while there will be other times when we will need to possess a controlled anger. May we all be wise enough to carry out our anger in a way that brings honor and glory to our God. May we ever strive for the ultimate goal as set by the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as we study our Bibles more and more.

Endnotes

1 Note on Proverbs by Steve Lloyd taken from the Chino church of Christ website.

2 Bill Jackson, ed., **The Book Of Proverbs**, (Austin, TX: Southwest Publications, 1988), p. 337.

3 Derek Kidner, **Proverbs**, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), p. 115.

4 Jackson, p. 286



About The Author

Married to Jackie, 2 sons, 2 daughters. Graduate: Southwest School of Bible Studies. Local preaching: AZ, CA, NM, TX. Evangelistic work: Bermuda, Jamaica, South Africa, Czech Republic. Instructed part-time: Southern California School of Evangelism; Brown Trail Preacher Training School. Local Preacher: Shenandoah church of Christ, San Antonio, TX.

CHAPTER 22

The Merry Heart In Proverbs

Dave Leonard

Preface

IT IS BOTH A privilege and an honor to have this opportunity to speak on the annual **POWER** Lectures. This lectureship, as many others, gives sound, faithful brethren a real reason for joy in the midst of a “crooked and perverse nation.” Only eternity will reveal the fruitful effects and accomplishments of the wonderful efforts put forth by the Southaven congregation, under the leadership of her godly elders. I also want to express my appreciation to brothers B. J. Clarke and Wayne Jones for their efforts in the kingdom, their soundness and faithfulness in preaching, and their friendship.

Introduction

It is amazing and ironic that “the more things change, the more they remain the same.” The problems with which contemporary people struggle are the problems that challenged people in the first-century church, as well as all of mankind from the first generations of which we read in Genesis. Because of this, we know most assuredly that the Bible is relevant. God’s Word addresses the issues which have always plagued the souls of man, and I do not believe that there could be a study more profitable, useful,

or enjoyable than that of “The Sayings of Solomon: Pearls From The Proverbs.” From the inspiration of God, through one of the wisest of men (1 Kings 3:5-15), come teachings and insights from the simplest to the deepest orders.

The Proverbs, as well as the Psalms, the Beatitudes, and other tremendous texts of the Bible, teach us about man and the achievement of true (Biblical) happiness. When we read of those who are happy, joyous, merry, and blessed, we are often reading about comparable or related effects upon various lives. The Bible is not given to us to show an intangible, illusive emotion that is affected by everything that surrounds us. Webster’s number one definition for “happy” is, “favored by luck or fortune.”¹ We know that a dictionary does not necessarily give the original meaning of a word; it gives common usage. Therefore, the most common concepts of happiness all deal with the chance happenings and circumstances that affect one’s life. Because of this, too many rely on **good luck** or **fortune** to bring a level of misguided “happiness.” The Biblical idea of happiness involves blessedness, a spiritual reason behind the happiness [Phil. 4:4—“Rejoice **in the Lord**”—this passage gives one a great reason for rejoicing; cf. Acts 8:39 (emp. mine throughout, DL)].

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). To be sure, we are living in less than an ideal world. We do not live among perfect people (ourselves included). The weather is not always fair. Times are not always good. Circumstances are not always conducive to cheerfulness. People are not always kind, thoughtful, and helpful.

We are reminded, nevertheless, that we could be a great disappointment to our Lord, Who said, “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). He did not say, “Ye are the **clouds** of the world.” A cloud behind the counter never attracted a customer. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem never

won a convert to Judaism. A cheerless Christian is no adornment to “the doctrine of God” (Tit. 2:10). We shall never be spiritually effective until we have first become spiritually attractive.

One of the greatest desires of every person is to be happy. We often hear of the quest or search for happiness, finding happiness, etc. There are many words and ideas that we automatically associate with being happy: joy, laughter, pleased, contented, and satisfied, to name a few. Some may not care about being successful, rich, or good-looking. It doesn't matter to some if they are married or single, or whether they have a family. Many are not concerned with whether they have numerous friends.

To others, material possessions are not that important, nor having the funds to travel and vacation in exotic places. But, regardless of the “things” and relationships people have in life, everyone desires to be happy. In the seventeenth century, the French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal put it this way:

All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.²

In spite of the fact that all men want happiness and strenuously strive for it, very few people achieve a real state of happiness. We need to learn that true happiness is not dependent upon external situations and circumstances. Many have not found happiness simply because they have not learned to look for it in the right way and place.

What Things Produce A Merry Heart?

As we have already stated, true happiness is not to be found in material, temporal things. True happiness can only be found when looking to the source of “every good and every perfect gift” (Jas. 1:17). From several Biblical texts, such as Psalm 1 or Matthew 5, which reveal the blessedness that leads us to true happiness, we are instructed to turn to the Word of God for contentment, satisfaction, joy, and happiness. In the Proverbs are listed several things that will produce a merry heart in us.

Finding Wisdom And Getting Understanding

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her (Prov. 3:13-18).

Wisdom and understanding are so precious, so valuable, that they are to be sought more than gold, gems, or any other material blessing or treasure that we could imagine. The man who obtains wisdom and understanding and retains or holds onto them is called “happy” (blessed). James 1:5 instructs us to pray to God for wisdom, while we are studying for knowledge and understanding: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

It is an unending work in the life of a Christian to continue growing in wisdom and understanding. But the

end result is well worth the effort we put forth, for we will be truly blessed of God.

Counseling Peace

“Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy” (Prov. 12:20). Those that consult the good of their brethren and neighbors, study the things which make for peace and give peaceable advice, promote healing attempts and contrive healing methods, and further the welfare of others, will have not only the credit, but the comfort of it. They will have joy and success, perhaps beyond their expectation. Remember the teaching of Jesus, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9).

Fulfilled Desire

“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12). Waiting for a blessing, no matter what it may be, is not enjoyable for anyone. We have, for years, used phrases such as “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” in an attempt to lessen the pain and anguish of heart that comes when a loved one is away for a time. But “when the desire cometh,” when we finally receive the thing for which we are languishing, what a blessing it truly is! It is that which will sustain us no matter what we face—i.e., “a tree of life.”

Showing Mercy On The Poor

“He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he” (Prov. 14:21). Taken in connection with the preceding verse, this teaches that it is a sin to despise and shun a man because he is poor or of low estate; such a one has a claim for love and pity, and it is a crime to withhold them from him for selfish considerations. The Christian view is taught by the parable

of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Contempt is contrasted with mercy, sin with blessing. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Paul penned another precious passage, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Seeing What Is Good Or A Good Report

The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat (Prov. 15:30).

The clear brightness of one's own eye cannot be meant, for then that were as much as to say that it is the effect, not that it is the cause, of a happy heart, but the brightness of the eyes of others that meet us.³

The glowing glance that shows a pure, happy heart and a friendly disposition gladden the heart of him on whom they are turned. Likewise, a good report strengthens them and gives them health (cf. Prov 3:8; Prov. 16:24). Sight and hearing are compared in the two phrases, "bones" in the latter taking the place of "heart" in the former. Both the happy look and good news cause joy of heart.

Trusting In The Lord

"He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord happy is he" (Prov. 16:20). There is no one else in whom we can place our trust, and know that we will be blessed (Psm. 118:8-9).

In Proverbs 3:5-6, the admonition is given which should always be our course of thought and action: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (cf. Prov. 14:12; Prov. 28:25; Prov. 29:25; Jer.10:23).

Doing Judgment (Justice)

“It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity” (Prov. 21:15). There is no joy in the world comparable in depth and purity to that of the good conscience, no exercise that brings so much health and pleasure as acting rightly and doing good. But the corrupt mind of evil men can take no delight in looking at goodness, in contemplating pure and noble conduct. For the consequences can only be the judgment and punishment of their own iniquity.

***A Wise Son Who Speaks Right Things/
A Righteous Child***

“My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things” (Prov. 23:15-16). “The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice” (Prov. 23:24-25). One of a parent’s greatest joys is seeing the children they raised following the Word of God and letting it guide their thinking, speech, and actions. Nothing should ever bring a Christian parent more pleasure from the lives of their children than to see the wisdom of God exuding from their being. A wise child is one who has been taught extensively the Word of God (Prov. 1:5-9; cf. Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4), has been disciplined properly according to that Word (Prov. 13:24; Prov. 19:18; Prov. 22:15; Prov. 23:13-14; Prov. 29:15-17), and carries the Word throughout his life (Prov. 22:6).

***Ointment (Oil) And Perfume/
Sweetness Of Good Counsel***

“Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel” (Prov. 27:9).

The meaning is that, as ointments and perfumes gladden the heart, so do the sweet and loving words of one who speaks in earnest from his heart. The idea is primarily of a friend who gives wise, godly counsel, speaking the truth in love, or shows his approval by discreet commendation.

Fearing Always

“Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief” (Prov. 28:14). The context of this passage seems to indicate that one must constantly be afraid or fear sin coming upon his soul. The contrast of the second phrase shows the vast difference between one who fears sin and one who welcomes it into his bosom. We must fear God in the sense of reverence, awe, and even “the terror of the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:11), but we must have a very reasonable, understanding fear of sin and its eternal consequences!

Keeping The Law

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Prov. 29:18). When the revelation of God is not in consideration, when there is the absence of Divine Will, the people will be in confusion, disorder, and rebellion; the people, uncontrolled, “cast off restraint.” Contrasted to the lawlessness and ruin of a people uninfluenced by religious or spiritual guidance is the blessed, happy state of those who obey the Word of God.

To achieve true happiness, we need to understand the question so often posed and pondered: “What is the purpose of life?” In further writings of Solomon, the book of Ecclesiastes, this theme is developed and the conclusion is drawn: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). Note: “this is the whole

of man.” That is what man is all about. That is the purpose of life! What if I have a wrong view of the purpose of life? What if I am looking in all the wrong places for meaning, for satisfaction, yea, for happiness? Scanning through this list of what these Proverbs tell us will produce a merry heart should bring our minds to bear on the fact that true happiness comes from pleasing God, not from seeking our own pleasure (Matt. 16:25-26).

What Are The Manifestations That We Have A Merry Heart?

Inward Emotions

Our emotions or feelings are directly affected by our attitudes and state of heart (mind). If we, as Christians, think properly about our stations in life, our emotions will always be blessed. One of our greatest assets as a child of God is that, no matter the afflictions or problems we face, we can always have an attitude of joy or rejoicing. We have a heart (mind) that is constantly full of contentment and, therefore, happiness. A heart that is full of happiness produces blessed emotions: “All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast” (Prov. 15:15).

The child of God who appears so downtrodden and afflicted is not as unhappy as he seems. He understands that his present problems are well worth enduring (2 Cor. 4:16-5:10; Rom. 8:18; Matt. 5:10-12). “The true and real happiness of a man is thus defined, not by external things, but by the state of the heart, in which, in spite of the apparently prosperous condition, a secret sorrow may gnaw, and which, in spite of an externally sorrowful state, may be at peace, and be joyfully confident in God.”⁴ A faithful Christian can sing in prison as well as in a palace (Acts 16:25); he can joyfully endure the spoiling of his

possessions (Heb. 10:34); he can praise God even in misery and destitution (Job 1:21; Hab. 3:17ff).

Outward Manifestations

We read, in Proverbs 15:13, “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.” Emotions or feelings are of the heart, the inner man, and therefore need an outward expression or manifestation in order to be seen. Just as people only know our thoughts when we reveal them in words, others can only know our emotions as we reveal them through expression. There is sympathy between the mind and body, so that a merry heart is reflected in the happy expression of countenance. This is a general psychological truth, that the condition of the heart leaves its stamp on the appearance and on the activity of the person. We commonly show when we are happy or merry of heart by the smiles on our faces, our demeanor, our speech, and even in the way we carry ourselves. People can see happiness in us.

Consider children who are too young to understand many words. They can tell by the slam of the door, the harshness or insistence of a tone of voice, the quickness of a step, or the look on a face, that their parent is upset, whether it is with them or someone or something else. By the same token, the same child knows by the gentleness of all the same features—the easy shutting of the door, the sweetness of a tone of voice, the easy approach, and the kind, loving expression on a face—that their parent is in good spirits and will treat them lovingly and gently. It has been said, “the face is the mirror of the soul,” showing that we have an appearance that is usually related to the way we feel or think. As Christians, what is there in this world that should ever remove the smile from our faces? What should ever cause the manifestations of a merry heart to depart from our countenance?

What Are The Benefits Of Having A Merry Heart?

Physical

In Proverbs 17:22 it is written, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” Since time immemorial, sages and physicians alike have advocated a merry heart as a perfect remedy for life’s ailments. For instance, the Greek poet Pindar wrote, “The best of healers is good cheer,” and the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, “Joy, temperance and repose, Slam the door on the doctor’s nose.”

It is fitting then that modern medical research should discover that laughter is a good medicine for the heart. The effect of laughter on the heart is rather like a vigorous massage. During laughter, the heart beat quickens and blood pressure rises; after laughter, both heart rate and blood pressure drop to a point that is lower than its initial resting rate. Laughter is a loving medicine (cf. Prov. 18:14, “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?”).

A merry heart also has great physical benefits in that it is catching. Laughter is like a communicable disease; it spreads from person to person like an electrical pulse.

Spiritual

Not only does a merry heart produce many physical benefits, but, spiritually, a merry heart causes a Christian to be able to find joy in everything. Those who belong to the Lord should be the happiest people in the world, because they have the true happiness which comes from being blessed by God. Upon examining a Christian, we find one who has been saved from sin (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), has fellowship with God and His people now (1 John 1:3; 1 John 1:7), and is looking forward to a home in heaven

(Eph. 5:23-27). God's people rejoice in their salvation "in the Lord" (Phil. 4:4; cf. Acts 8:39). **In the Lord** is where all spiritual blessings are enjoyed, where redemption and forgiveness are, and where the inheritance can be obtained (Eph. 1:3-14). What is there that should remove our joy (Rom. 8:35-39)?

Considering the spiritual blessings that we receive in Christ, Christians have the greatest reasons for rejoicing in spite of any situation or circumstance (Jas. 1:2-3; Rom. 5:3; 1 Pet. 4:12-16). Because Christians think properly, they do not let circumstances or situations dictate their rejoicing. Anyone can be "happy" if everything is going their way. But what happens when things are not going so well? In every situation, place, and time, Christians have the greatest reason for rejoicing in the Lord because they are living for Christ (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20). When circumstances are not pleasing, we handle the circumstances by living in Christ.

Remember the teaching of Jesus' perfect example of joy in spite of circumstances:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the **joy** that was set before him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

There was nothing about the betrayal, trials, scourging, or crucifixion of Jesus that comes across as pleasant. The entire situation was fraught with physical and emotional pain. We can easily understand that, in His human nature, Jesus was dreading all that was about to happen (Luke 22:39-46). Yet, even though the situation was a dreadful one, Jesus still found joy in what He was doing for us,

because He saw our great need and loved us that much (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-8).

A merry heart will likewise greatly benefit us in dealing with others. We are commanded by Jesus, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12). Christians love others, even when they are unlovely; are always ready to serve others; and always “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

As Christians, we are not to be overly concerned with the things that concern the world. We are shown that the key for us is to “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2; cf. 1 John 2:15-17). We realize that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). Because of a merry heart, we can rejoice in spite of things. Nothing extraneous can remove us from the love of God—so what could happen that should remove our joy?

How Important Is It To Have A Merry Heart?

Being joyful, truly happy, is not simply a good or desirable trait for a child of God. There are far too many passages instructing us as to what it takes to have joy in our lives for us to take this lightly. People have teased and told jokes for years about not being able to smile or enjoy anything because we are Christians. Truly our lives and demeanors should reflect the serious nature of our faithful, even sacrificial, living (Rom. 12:1-2), but that in no way should cause us to lose the joy that we find in Christ, or the expression of that joy in our lives.

It is important for God’s people to have a merry heart because God commands it. We are not only instructed in what it takes to have a merry heart (see the Proverbs listed

under the first point, “What Things Produce a Merry Heart”), we are also **commanded** to have a merry heart, to rejoice. Let us once more consider the exhortation of Paul recorded in Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” When we remember the only source of genuine joy, of true happiness, that we are in Christ and have all spiritual blessings, we **must** be full of joy. James tells us that, even in trials and problems, we **must** be a joyful people: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jas. 1:2-3). Peter also instructed Christians to understand their sufferings and rejoice in them, if they are, indeed, for the name of the Lord:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings;...If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye;...Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf...Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator (1 Pet. 4:13-19).

The necessity of having a merry heart is also brought forth in our associations and opportunities among people of the world. Think of all the souls that will never be gathered into the kingdom if we show what morose, downcast, and unhappy people we are. An account is given of a lady, traveling by public transportation, who watched two people displaying opposing emotions—one was weeping while the other was laughing. She noted the response of the people surrounding them—that, soon, everyone was gathered with the one who was laughing, eager to join in the laughter. She later penned this poem, the first few lines of which have become a cliché:

“The Way of the World”

Laugh and the world laughs with you;
 Weep and you weep alone,
 For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
 But has troubles enough of its own;
 Sing, and the hills will answer,
 The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
 But shrink from voicing care.

Rejoice and men will seek you,
 Grieve, and they turn and go,
 They want full measure of all your pleasure,
 But they do not need your woe;
 Be glad and your friends are many,
 Be sad, and you lose them all;
 There are none to decline your nestar'd wine
 But you must drinks life's gall.

Feast, and your halls are crowded,
 Fast, and the world goes by,
 Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
 But no man can help you die!
 There is no room in the halls of pleasure,
 For a large and lordly train,
 But only one by one we must all file on,
 Through the narrow isles of pain.

- Ella Wheeler Wilcox⁵

We need to let the world see our joy in Christ. Speaking to His apostles, Jesus held up their love for one another as a “badge of discipleship”: “By this shall **all men know** that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Just as our love for one another is evident, we **must** show our joy to the world if we are to have any hope of converting it to Christ. We need to be impressed with this mark of spirituality in our lives!

As Christians we do not rejoice **for** all things, but **in** all things: there is a great difference. Sinners need to see that, if they will come into Christ, they, too, can rejoice **in** all things. A merry heart may make all the difference in converting a lost soul.

What Does A Man Have To Do To Be Happy, According To The Book Of Proverbs?

Happiness And Strife

How many of us want to be happy and cheerful? How many want heartache, turmoil, or oppression? Read Proverbs 15:13-17:

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Did you notice the contrasts in these verses? We find “happy” and “cheerful” versus “heartache,” “oppression,” and “turmoil.” Are these attitudes a choice or simply the result of events and circumstances beyond our control? Are these verses simply providing us with the knowledge that happy is better than sad, or do they tell us that our decisions and actions affect our emotions and attitudes? Some of these verses are descriptive, while others are instructive. Verses 14, 16, and 17 are intended to teach us the path to happiness. Verse 14 teaches an understanding man to seek to know more, to gain in knowledge. Verse 16 tells us that respectful or reverential obedience to God is better than money or material blessings. Verse 17 shows that love is more desirable than the greatest fare we can imagine. Put together, this passage reveals that knowing and obeying God and loving those around us are the keys to joy.

Just as Proverbs teaches us the way to happiness and joy, it also teaches that a number of decisions and

actions create problems. Read Proverbs 30:32-33. In this passage we are given the recipe for stirring up anger and strife. Have we ever behaved in such a way or seen this behavior in others? Does it not always produce the predicted result? Look at Proverbs 29:11. Every day we hear people “venting,” or “speaking their minds.” I am shocked sometimes when someone says, “I can’t help myself. I just say whatever comes to my mind.” The Bible says that person is a fool. Compare this to Proverbs 26:20-28. What effect does a talebearer or a contentious man have on others? How can we affect the lives and emotions of others with our tongues? We can read many more Proverbs and learn that pride, envy, a quick temper, vengeance, and other wicked choices lead us to strife.

Decisions

We have to decide to be happy. As with every attitude and emotion that we possess, happiness is a chosen response. We must decide that we want to be happy, and then **do something** about it. The Book of Proverbs teaches us much of what we need to **do** if we want to have a merry heart. Simply put, we must be obedient to the commands of God. We must obey the Gospel of Christ so that we can (1) have forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 1:16-17); (2) be added into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27); (3) be added to the church (Acts 2:41-47); (4) enjoy all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3-14); and (5) look forward to a home in heaven for eternity (Heb. 5:8-9; Eph. 5:23-27).

Conclusion

The tragedy of our day is that people, even many members of the Lord’s church, think that following Christ subtracts from real enjoyment and pleasure in living. No theory could take you further from the truth. As we have just studied, we are shown, Biblically, **how** to have a merry

heart, what **benefits** arise from having a merry heart, and we are even **commanded** to have a merry heart. Do we not realize that something is **wrong** when people get more enjoyment out of worldly, material pleasures than they do out of the spiritual blessings and benefits that are in Christ? If we really understood and believed Christ's statement recorded in John 10:10, it would be difficult to hinder Christians, or to dampen their joy, in carrying forth their God-given responsibilities in every area of life. If we turn to God's Word and follow its precepts, we can be blessed of God, which will produce a merry heart and all the attending results that come from truly being happy.

Endnotes

1 **Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary**, 10th edition (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993).

2 Blaise Pascal, **Pensées**, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Books, 1670).

3 Keil & Delitzsch, "Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, & Song of Solomon," **Commentary on the Old Testament**, Vol. 6 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), p. 332.

4 Ibid, p. 324.

5 M. P. Wheeler, "Ella Wheeler Wilcox," **Sketches Of Wisconsin Pioneer Women** (Fort Atkinson, WI: Hoard & Sons, 1924), pp. 57-60.



About The Author

Native of Arkansas. Married to Nicci (Peeler). Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching. Gospel meetings and lectureships in AL, AR, GA, KY, MS, MO, TN, and WY. Mission Work: Upton, WY for one year. Local Preaching: Sansom Ave. Congregation in Gadsden, AL since 1996.

Part Four

**Special
Studies In
Proverbs**

this page left intentionally blank

CHAPTER 23

Honesty In Proverbs

Paul Meacham, Jr.

Introduction

TO THE ELDERS, DEACONS, preachers, and beloved members of the Southaven church of Christ, I extend my profoundest thanks for the invitation to be a part of this great effort. While all faithful saints are precious to the cause of Christ and, therefore, close to my heart, no congregation has meant more to my family and me than you have. You are responsible for so many of the wonderful memories and precious moments that make this pilgrimage in Christ joyful. Thank you.

All who would seek to know true wisdom must applaud the choice of themes you have made for this book. As God is the source of wisdom (Jas. 1:5), it is right that we dedicate our time to study of the wisdom He has revealed to man. As much of that wisdom came through the pen of Solomon, a study of the Proverbs will be particularly appropriate and fruitful.

The topic of honesty, as it is discussed in this chapter, includes thirty-four assigned verses from the Proverbs and two verses added by the author. The topic has been subdivided into four categories: Dishonesty for the Sake of Gain, Dishonesty That Perverts Justice, Dishonesty's Bitter Fruit, Dishonesty's Taproot Motive, and a brief, concluding Exhortation to Honesty.

Dishonesty For The Sake Of Gain

One given to lying will do so for almost any reason. Hence the manmade proverb, “Some will lie when the truth is cheaper.” However, many who would not lie for any other reason will lie to make, or take, an extra dollar in a business deal. Often the rationale is given, “It’s not personal. It’s just business.”

God, in His wisdom, addressed the very matter of dishonesty in business: “A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight” (Prov. 11:1).¹ As is still true today, goods for sale were often weighed in front of the buyer to guarantee that a just measure was being received. Additionally, weighing out an agreed-upon amount of gold, silver, or some other precious material was often how payment was made. Therefore,

Every person engaged in trade of any kind carried with him a pair of balances or scales and a set of weights in a pouch or bag. Dishonest men would carry two kinds of weights: the lighter types for selling purposes, and the heavier weights for buying (Micah 6:11).²

By “tipping” the scales or using different weights, the very act that was supposed to ensure fair trade could be made a tool for dishonesty.

Whether buying or selling, Jehovah demanded that his people deal honestly in business:

A just weight and balance are the LORD’s: all the weights of the bag are his work (Prov. 16:11).

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt (Lev. 19:35-36).

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in

thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God (Deut. 25:13-16).

To make matters worse, false weights and skewed scales were often employed to cheat those who could least afford the loss. The people of Amos' day would spend the days of feasting and worship,

Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? (Amos 8:5).

They were anxious to get back to the business of doing crooked business, and their goal was to “buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes” (Amos 8:6).

All those who would resort to dishonesty in business are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 11:1; Deut. 25:13-16). The word “abomination” means “something disgusting.”³ It is not a trivial matter to “skim a little off the top” or “fudge the numbers just a little.” It is an abomination to the Lord. In my younger days I managed a fast-food restaurant. It was the case then, and is probably still true today, that the number-one area of financial loss for such a restaurant is employee theft. When we begin to see “petty theft” as an abomination, we will be seeing things the way God sees them.

Dishonesty may seem to be the path to quick and easy wealth, but God has declared that “He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor” (Prov. 28:8):

Wealth increased by covetous plundering of a neighbour does not remain with him who has scraped it together in so relentless a manner.⁴

Sometimes God in his providence so orders it that that which one got unjustly another uses charitably; it is strangely turned into the hands of one that will pity the poor and do good with it.⁵

Such is not the fate of the honest man, for “much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment” (Prov. 13:23). While the language of this verse may seem odd to us, the contrast drawn between the fates of the honest and dishonest men is striking:

By the rule of interpretation by the contrast of opposites, and by supplying the wanting member in one clause from its opposite expressed in the other clause, the sense is, But there is food (i.e., wealth) possessed by rich men, that is destroyed for want of honesty (literally, judgment or justice) in its acquisition and its employment. The poor man’s (honest) labour forms the contrast to the rich man’s “want of justice” in his acquisitions. “The newly tilled land” of the poor forms the contrast to the rich man’s possessions held for some time. The “much food” of the poor, secured by honest labour, is opposed to the “food destroyed” of the rich man (Prov. 16:8; Jer. 17:11; Jer. 22:13; Ezek. 22:29).⁶

In other words, the dishonest man may collect much, but he cannot hold on to it because “He that oppreseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want” (Prov. 22:16). Not only does he find himself without the things he desires in this life, but in the end he will learn that “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death” (Prov. 21:6). Those who do so “will meet with destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices they are really seeking death.”⁷

Some may object that it is just not possible for them to stay in business without “cutting a corner here and there.” That is not true! If one is engaged in a lawful and upright business, dishonesty is not necessary. If a salesman, sell a needed product at a fair price and success will be yours. If you’re in the service industry, then sell a needed service, perform at a high standard, and the public will line up to pay for your work. If, by some quirk of fate, you find yourself in a situation where you must choose between poverty and dishonesty, God says to choose poverty, for “a poor man is better than a liar” (Prov. 19:22).

A similar situation was addressed when Israel was warned, “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set” (Prov. 22:28): “We are here taught not to invade another man’s right, though we can find ways of doing it ever so secretly and plausibly, clandestinely and by fraud, without any open force.”⁸ The one cheated is harmed whether a physical blow is struck in a mugging or a fraudulent keystroke is made on a computer. The fact that man has categorized one as violence and the other merely as “white-collar crime” is immaterial to the Lord.

An additional warning is given to those who would consider taking advantage of the apparently helpless: “Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee” (Prov. 23:10-11). Man might see a helpless widow who is “ripe for the picking.” God, however, sees one who needs His care. As God has always made special provision for the care of the poor, He promises to stand as their redeemer against those who would seek to defraud them. Truly, the Lord will “establish the border of the widow” (Prov. 15:25).

Each case mentioned thus far is a consideration of man’s greed moving him to use dishonesty to take advantage of another. The popular wisdom of man

encourages us to lie, cheat, and steal if a dollar can be made without getting caught. The wisdom of God says that all things thus obtained are empty, abominable, impossible to retain, and will be rectified by the great Redeemer.

Dishonesty That Perverts Justice

A second area addressed by many of the Proverbs is the practice of dishonesty by witnesses and judges who seek to pervert judgment. Man has instituted many different systems of justice, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. However, no system, even one instituted by God, can produce judgment when its participants substitute dishonesty for the truth. Being a God of justice (Rom. 3:26; Rom. 11:22), Jehovah spoke often in His Book of Wisdom regarding false witnesses and perverted judgments.

Solomon defines a true witness as one who will not lie: “A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies” (Prov. 14:5). Notice that a false witness is not defined as one who has lied or is lying but as one who will lie. If there are circumstances in which a man will lie, he, by God’s definition, is a false witness. Honesty is not situational and it is not relative. David answered the question, “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?” (Psm. 15:1), in part with “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not” (Psm. 15:4; cf. Prov. 20:25). A man who cannot be relied on always to tell the truth cannot be relied on ever to tell the truth.

The reason for this is that “He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit” (Prov. 12:17). Righteousness and deceit are mutually exclusive. Just as blessing and cursing do not belong in the same mouth (Jas. 3:10), the truth and a lie cannot reside in the same tongue: “A true witness delivereth souls:

but a deceitful witness speaketh lies” (Prov. 14:25). Just as “a deceitful witness” is contrasted with “a true witness,” “speaketh lies” is placed in opposition to “delivereth souls.” Souls being delivered is the result of an unstated but implied action—speaking the truth. Souls being lost is the unstated but implied result of the stated action—“speaking lies.” The stark difference in outcomes should serve to impress upon us that no man can be a dispensary for both truth and lies:

Doth a fountain send forth at the same place
sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my
brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine,
figs? **so can no fountain both yield salt
water and fresh** (Jas. 3:11-12, emp. mine
throughout, PDM).

No matter what his claim, the false witness is further described as one who “scorneth judgment: and...devoureth iniquity” (Prov. 19:28). He perverts judgment with his lying tongue because he has no respect for justice. That which is right holds no appeal to him because his own actions are evil and his motives corrupt. He eagerly feasts on iniquity: “How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” (Job 15:16). Such is God’s definition of a dishonest witness.

The damage that can be done by a false witness is impossible to overstate: “A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow” (Prov. 25:18). The maul was a heavy, sledgehammer-like weapon of war. Used at close range it brought about its intended end by crushing the skull or chest of the enemy into a bloody pulp. The sword was also an instrument of war or sometimes of personal protection (Luke 22:36). Though quicker, and in some ways less messy than the maul, it was still used to deliver death at close range. The sharp arrow was far more subtle but just as deadly (2 Kings 9:24).

It was designed to be used at a distance and killed by piercing a vital organ or causing enough blood loss that the struck man went into shock and died. These are the three figures chosen by the Holy Spirit to describe the damage done by a false witness. It is no wonder that the Psalmist cries out in distress, “Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue” (Psm. 120:2).

What is the fate of one who through dishonesty brings about such destruction?

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape (Prov. 19:5).

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish (Prov. 19:9).

A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly (Prov. 21:28).

Why is the judgment against the false witness so strong? Because a man’s words are the true reflection of the thoughts of his heart: “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). Those who bear false witness (public dishonesty) and those who lie (private dishonesty) were not created with a lying tongues. “They have **taught** their tongue to speak lies” (Jer. 9:5). They have chosen “the tongue of the crafty” (Job 15:5): “They bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD” (Jer. 9:3).

Therefore, the Lord hates “a false witness that speaketh lies” (Prov. 6:19). The fate of the false witness is so terrible that we must heed the warning: “Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips” (Prov. 24:28).

A closely related Proverb demonstrates that it is also possible to pervert justice and practice dishonesty by remaining silent: “Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not” (Prov. 29:24). Notice that the one who partners himself with a thief hates his own soul. This places him in the same class with the adulterer (Prov. 6:32), the one who sins against wisdom (Prov. 8:36), the one who refuses instruction (Prov. 15:32), and the one who provokes the king to anger (Prov. 20:2).

This partner of a thief perverts judgment by remaining silent when he hears the “cursing.” The American Standard Version better translates the verse, “He heareth the adjuration and uttereth nothing.” Adjuration is defined as “the act of requiring or taking a solemn oath,”⁹ or “a solemn act or appeal, whereby one man, usually a person vested with natural or official authority, imposes upon another the obligation of speaking or acting as if under the solemnity of an oath.”¹⁰ Moses’ Law required that “if a soul sin, and **hear the voice of swearing**, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; **if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity**” (Lev. 5:1). It was therefore proper to adjure one to speak what he had witnessed. Under such circumstances, silence is dishonest.

Thus far, the Scriptures noted have addressed themselves to dishonesty on the part of the witnesses. What does God’s Book have to say about the one who sits in judgment of such matters? “To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress” (Prov. 28:21):

It is a fundamental error in the administration of justice, and that which cannot but lead men to abundance of transgression, to consider the parties concerned more than the merits of the

cause, so as to favour one because he is a gentleman, a scholar, my countryman, my old acquaintance, has formerly done me a kindness, or may do me one, or is of my party and persuasion, and to bear hard on the other party because he is a stranger, a poor man, has done me an ill turn, is or has been my rival, or is not of my mind, or has voted against me. Judgment is perverted when any consideration of this kind is admitted into the scale, any thing but pure right.¹¹

The “piece of bread” received for this unbalancing of the scales of justice is proverbial of the most meager of things. It is usually indicative of those who are oppressed (Jer. 37:21), or that to which a whorish woman reduces a man (Prov. 6:26): “The judge who at first was induced only by a great price to transgress by favouring one side, through the habit of sinning comes at last to do so for a mere trifle.”¹² Hence the admonition, “Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous” (Deut. 16:19).

By way of contrast, consider the judge who rules righteously: “Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer” (Prov. 24:26). The reference to the kissing of the lips should be understood as a demonstration of respect or possible allegiance. This does not mean that the judge will have the respect only of the one who thought his answer was right, but rather that he will be respected and loved by those who recognize in him an equitable spirit of right judgment. However, will “every man” really respect him? Even the most debased man would choose to have his case heard before a righteous judge if he were the one who had been wronged. By contrast, even the most jaded criminal knows that a corrupt judge can be bought just as easily by the opposing side.

“Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?...Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment” (Job 8:3; Job 34:12). God will not pervert justice Himself, and He will not tolerate those who do. Let us be sure we are “providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21), so that we, like the psalmist, can pray, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psm. 19:14).

Dishonesty’s Bitter Fruit

Only a fool begins to build before counting the cost of completing the project (Luke 14:28-30). Only a king destined for failure goes into battle without first counting his men and logically and accurately considering his odds for victory (Luke 14:31-32). Since the book of Proverbs was written to instruct us in “wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity” (Prov. 1:3), we must consider the fruit of dishonesty before we dare walk that path.

First, let us consider the fruit of dishonesty as it relates to how we are viewed by our fellowman: “Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain” (Prov. 25:14). All of us have felt the great disappointment of being promised something that never materialized. Whether it is a first-string position on a ball team, a return phone call after a date, the repayment of money owed, or a promotion at work, unfulfilled promises leave a wake of disappointment in all our lives. So it is with the dishonest man who promises much and delivers little:

[He] is likened to the phenomena of an eastern climate; the drought of summer, the eager expectation of men who watch the rising clouds and the freshening breeze, the bitter

disappointment when the breeze dies off, and the clouds pass away, and the wished for rain does not come.¹³

Such a one quickly destroys his reputation among all those with whom he associates. Every word from his mouth is instantly suspect. Even his good deeds are often questioned as though they came from evil motives because he cannot be trusted to deliver what he says. Because nothing he says can be taken at face value, he often finds others avoiding him and actively seeking to exclude him from their lives. Jesus said, “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matt. 5:37). One way we can ensure that our words are taken at face value is to deliver on the things we promise, every time.

Second, and more importantly, consider the fruit of dishonesty as it relates to how God views us: “Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight” (Prov. 12:22). How terrifying it would be to be an abomination to the Lord! Being an abomination to the Lord places the liar in a class with the homosexual (Lev. 18:22), the idolater (Deut. 7:35-36), the transgender cross-dresser (Deut. 22:5), and those who offered to God the money gained through whoredom (Deut. 23:18).

However, if we will but speak the truth and deal truly, we will be the “delight” of the Lord. The word “delight” comes from a Hebrew root word that refers to something that has been found pleasing enough to satisfy a debt. Such an appellation from Jehovah places one in the company of those who “exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jer. 9:24). That is why “The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment” (Prov. 12:19).

So, what is the fruit of dishonesty? It destroys one's reputation among his fellowmen, and it causes him to be an abomination in the sight of God. Just as we can examine the fruit of a tree and know the type and condition of the tree, so it is with the fruit of dishonesty. What does that fruit tell us? It tells us that, no matter how inconsequential man may consider the matter of lying to be, Jehovah has declared, "A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame" (Prov. 13:5). When you hear a lie, you can know it has come from the lips of a wicked, loathsome, and shameful man who has chosen to make himself an abomination to God.

Dishonesty's Taproot Motive

What is the motive behind such a devastating practice like lying? We have observed a few in this brief study. Some are motivated by greed, and other by fear. However, the Proverbs reveal to us what I believe is the underlying motive behind all lying, the "taproot" of the dishonesty: "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him" (Prov. 26:24). It is a hatred for God, His Word, His children, himself, and all things that are right that leads one to dishonesty. Be warned when dealing with such a man that "When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart" (Prov. 26:25). Why can he not be believed? His heart is filled with abominations. He is one who with false flattery lays a trap for his neighbor (Prov. 29:5). Once again, what is at the root of the problem? "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin" (Prov. 26:28).

Love will not resort to lying even if it seems easier at the moment. Love will not resort to lying even if the truth will be painful to the one who hears it: "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a

friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:5-6). Yes, the words of truth are sometimes painful and do sometimes cause wounds. Such is also the nature of surgery. Surgery is often painful, causes wounds, and sometimes leaves deep scars. However, it is also often necessary to ensure health and life. An enemy will kiss and flatter us with lying words and false accolades because he hates us. A true friend will always speak the words of truth even when they are painful to hear.

Exhortation To Honesty

“Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way” (Prov. 23:19). Choose the way of honesty at all times and in all things. Refuse to bend even the slightest to the greatest temptation. Call upon the Lord with the wise man:

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain (Prov. 30:8-9).

For we are assured that there is a glorious place awaiting the saved: “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, **neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie**: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27).

Endnotes

1 **The Holy Bible**, King James Version. All references are to this version unless otherwise stated.

2 Merrill T. Gilbertson, “**The Way It Was In Bible Times**,” (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), p. 116.

3 **Biblesoft’s New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers And Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary**, CD-ROM, Version 3.3A (Seattle: Biblesoft, 1994).

4 C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, "Book of Proverbs," **Commentary On The Old Testament**, CD-ROM, Version 3.3A (Seattle: BibleSoft, 1997).

5 Matthew Henry, "Book of Proverbs," **Matthew Henry's Commentary On The Whole Bible: New Modern Edition**, CD-ROM, Version 3.3A (Seattle: BibleSoft, 1997).

6 "Book of Proverbs," **Jamieson, Fausset, And Brown Commentary**, CD-ROM, Version 3.3A (Seattle: BibleSoft, 1997).

7 Henry.

8 Ibid.

9 Dwight M. Pratt, "Adjuration," **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, CD-ROM, Version 3.3A (Seattle: BibleSoft, 1995-1996).

10 John McClintock & James Strong, "Adjuration," **McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia**, CD-ROM, Version 3.3A (Seattle: BibleSoft, 2000).

11 Henry.

12 **Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary**.

13 F. C. Cook, "Book of Proverbs," **Barnes' Notes**, CD-ROM, Version 3.3A (Seattle: BibleSoft, 1997).



About The Author

Native of Tennessee. Married to April (Jarrett), 3 children. Education: enrolled as a first-year student at Memphis School of Preaching. Former speaker for the Truth For The World radio and television programs from 1998-2002. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Foreign campaigns: the Philippines; Ukraine; Ghana; Malawi; Zambia.

CHAPTER 24

Money In Proverbs

Gary McDade

Introduction

MONEY IS A GENERALLY accepted medium of exchange, a measure of value, or a means of payment. The accumulation of it in large or extraordinary amounts is interpreted as wealth; the absence or severe shortage of it is usually associated with poverty. It can be secured, saved, spent, squandered, or stolen. The possession of it is a matter of stewardship. As a blessing it can be bestowed by the Lord. The sage statement of Moses to Israel yields this truth:

And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day (Deut. 8:17-18).

God gives power to get wealth.

Serious problems arise when people operate outside of the Biblical directives concerning money. Paul, the apostle, said:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having

food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

He did not say, “Money is the root of all evil,” as some are prone to think; he said, “The **love** of money is the root of all evil” (emp. mine throughout, GM). See the difference? The rich receive special instructions later in the same chapter:

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

Riches properly used may be cashed in for a good foundation upon which may be built great hopes for eternal life.

In Proverbs, the wise man pled for a balance of this world’s goods. He wrote:

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain (Prov. 30:8-9).

He hoped to avoid poverty and was not seeking wealth, just his “allowance” as the Hebrew word for “convenient” suggests.

Paradoxes appear in the New Testament, where those in poverty are presented as examples to persuade proper performance pertaining to possessions. For example, the “certain poor widow” Jesus was observing at the Temple treasury cast in two mites, which make a farthing, being the smallest units of copper coinage of the day; it took two of them to make a “cent” (from the Greek *lepton*). She was in “severe poverty,” according to the meaning of the word “penury,” yet of her Jesus said:

Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance [superfluity, ASV] cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury [want, ASV] hath cast in all the living that she had (Luke 21:3-4).

Present-day, health-and-prosperity preachers would never look to such a person as interesting in relationship to money. High-powered fundraisers would not spend the price of a postage stamp to communicate with a needy widow-woman with absolutely no net worth. Yet Jesus placed her in the forefront of exemplary people in relation to finances. Why? Her use of very meager funds singled her out in sacrifice to God. She “cast in all the living she had.”

Another memorable example from the first century emerges from the churches of Macedonia. They were in a state of “deep poverty,” yet observe their complimentary use of a very small amount of money to establish firmly their sincere stance as saints of God:

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would

receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also (2 Cor. 8:1-6).

Today the mega-churches, sometimes with millions of dollars contributed in one day, are the coveted model.

Clearly, Jesus was looking for loyal followers who knew not to “trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). So, spiritually speaking, an examination must be made that goes beneath the surface of macro and microeconomics and understanding how money works. Wisdom exercised in regard to money is essential. Solomon provides an excellent resource for a study of money. Once he was visited by the queen of faraway Sheba, who had heard of his wisdom and traveled all the long miles over exhausting terrain to see him. Upon her arrival and her evaluation of Solomon, his wisdom, and his kingdom, she made the now-infamous observation, “The half was not told me” (1 Kings 10:1-7). He truly was one of the wisest and wealthiest men of the ages. He wrote 3,000 proverbs, in many of which he gave attention to the appropriate use of money (1 Kings 4:32). The book of Proverbs preserves no less than sixty verses mentioning money.

Money Is A Non-Essential For True Riches

The possession and enjoyment of true riches are available even without money for the righteous, but, no matter how much money they own, the wicked still have trouble. Solomon wrote, “In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble” (Prov. 15:6). Remember that Solomon is submitting sage advice when he says, “Better is little with the fear of the

Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith” (Prov. 15:16). A similar proverb says, “Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right” (Prov. 16:8). The Proverbs serve as a reminder that there are things more valuable than money: “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold” (Prov. 22:1). The proof of the superior value of choosing a good name over riches is seen when a person has no riches yet is upright or righteous.

A later proverb records, “Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich” (Prov. 28:6). Not only is an upright life “better,” but Proverbs also says, “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent” (Prov. 28:20). The priorities of life are referenced in the second half of that proverb. In his haste to become rich, the finer virtues may be laid aside, creating guilt. Today not a few young couples are sacrificing godly child-rearing on the altar of having the latest in material possessions. The arduous task of “bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” is forestalled in the frenzy for the fancy over the functional. The danger of sacrificing more important things to seek what may actually become an illusive objective is mentioned in Proverbs 28:22 and Proverbs 20:21:

He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him...An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Money Is Not An End In Itself

As has been shown, having money is not essential to true riches or true happiness; a move farther in that direction will indicate that money is not an end in itself. Many of the Proverbs come to bear on this subject:

Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death (Prov. 11:4).

He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch (Prov. 11:28).

There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches (Prov. 13:7).

The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all (Prov. 22:2).

Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words (Prov. 23:4-8).

Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied (Prov. 27:20).

The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out (Prov. 28:11).

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain (Prov. 30:8-9).

Money Put To Good Use

A variety of good uses for money receives attention in the book of Proverbs. As in all things, putting God first places a person in a primary position to receive heaven's favor. The Bible says, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy

barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Prov. 3:9-10). Many of the Proverbs are axiomatic. An example appears in connection with the right use of money. Just as the gracious woman retains her qualities to her honor, even so the quality of strength, perhaps moral more so than physical, is required to keep riches from getting away. The proverb is, “A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches” (Prov. 11:16). Riches obtained through hard work and industry represent the trading of a measure of value or exchange for the effort made.

A familiar situation is the trading of a forty-hour work week for a paycheck. Solomon pictured this trade-off as a ransom payment: “The ransom of a man’s life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke” (Prov. 13:8). Possibly the reason the individual under consideration in the second part of the verse is poor is that he does not understand or at least he does not want to hear about this trade-off of time and effort put toward a work to receive commensurate pay. This is like a friend of mine who was the superintendent for a large painting company in Memphis and asked one of his men why he could only get him to work four days a week. The answer he received is comical but portrays the real-life insight of the proverb. The slothful painter replied, “Because I can’t get by on three!” “The poor heareth not rebuke.”

In Proverbs 13:11, recognition of the principle of being rewarded with wages for work performed is given: “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.” A solid comprehension of how to obtain and retain money places a person in a position to leave a lasting legacy: “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just” (Prov. 13:22). As stated in the beginning, those who prefer to operate outside the

Biblical directives concerning money are unlikely, as a rule, to retain the wealth they do obtain.

The ability to bless others is another good use of the riches of which the Proverbs speak. Solomon wrote:

A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth (Prov. 17:8).

A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men (Prov. 18:16).

Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour (Prov. 19:4).

Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured (Prov. 27:18).

The prince that wanteth [lacketh, ASV] understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days (Prov. 28:16).

Money As An Instrument Of Generosity

Money is a medium of exchange that possesses value. It may, therefore, be viewed as a tool by which, among other things, generosity is conveyed. The use of money in this way has innumerable merits, some of which receive treatment in the Proverbs. Through generosity friendships are begun and strengthened. Proverbs 19:6 reads, "Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts." As generosity is extended to the poor, God takes account. The Bible says, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (Prov. 19:17). On the other hand, the poor are not to be forgotten: "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard" (Prov. 21:13).

Generosity has the power to pacify anger: "A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong

wrath” (Prov. 21:14). A splendid example of how this can occur comes from Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. She was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance (1 Sam. 25:3). Her foolish husband, Nabal, was on the verge of getting himself and his family wiped out by David and 200 of his men because of Nabal’s abuse and disrespect of David, who had provided protection and care for his sheep and men at Carmel. Swords, readied by skill and experience, were about to be drawn against Nabal and all he had, when Abigail approached David with beasts of burden laden with all manner of foodstuffs. Her well-reasoned discourse was effective in circumventing a slaughter, and the gift that preceded it began the healing process (1 Sam. 25:23-31). Nabal was a covetous, greedy person, but Abigail was a caring, giving person.

Proverbs 21:26 says, “He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous giveth and spareth not.” Such actions continue to receive accolades in Proverbs: “He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor” (Prov. 22:9). The universality of these proverbs finds application to many circumstances, and the confrontation between David and Nabal continues to bear that observation out. When Abigail convinced Nabal of his folly in slighting and slandering David and of the near-slaughter, the Bible says that “his heart died within him, and he became as a stone” (1 Sam. 25:37). About ten days later the Lord smote him so that he died (1 Sam. 25:38). Truly, “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse” (Prov. 28:27).

The Proverbs not only deal with money as it may be put to good use, but money as it may be put to evil uses also receives attention. The first part of the discussion has leaned toward the former, and the last part will present more of the latter.

Money Put To Evil Use

The advantages of riches are to be employed properly. The Proverbs caution, “The rich man’s wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty” (Prov. 10:15). The corresponding book of wisdom in the New Testament speaks a similar sentiment:

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you (Jas. 5:1-6).

A failure to listen to wisdom is not only a weakness of the rich because “the ransom of a man’s life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke” (Prov. 13:8).

How wise people gain wealth can actually promulgate their fortunes. The value of working for a living is seen in the proverb, “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase” (Prov. 13:11). When people hope to get something for nothing, it robs them of the fulfillment, satisfaction, and dignity afforded through honorable labor. On this point Solomon wrote, “He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live” (Prov. 15:27). Earlier the problem of “trusting in uncertain riches” was discussed, but once again caution is offered in the Proverbs: “The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit” (Prov. 18:11). Arrogance sometimes

attends the attitude of the rich: “The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly” (Prov. 18:23). Worldly pursuits often prohibit prosperity:

He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich... There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up (Prov. 21:17; Prov. 21:20).

Abuse of others is counterproductive to the accumulation of wealth because “he that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want” (Prov. 22:16).

Money Ill-Gotten

On occasion family members go to war against each other over their inheritance. Children casting aside a heritage of honesty and becoming greedy of gain ought not treat the sainted memory of honorable parents in any such manner. Whether the inheritance is great or small, the Bible promises that those who misbehave in this way will not be blessed. Solomon wrote, “An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed” (Prov. 20:21). Legal instruments are available (wills and trusts) that, when properly executed, serve to eliminate the potential for problems in this area. Testators should keep their wills or trusts up-to-date to reduce the possibility of a contest upon their demise.

A basic difference most people do not know between a will and a trust (living, revocable, or irrevocable) is that a will must go through probate court and a trust does not. Each state has “creditors’ rights” imposed on the will that must be honored, which means the estate cannot be distributed until the statute set by the state has been met—for example, one year to allow outstanding debts to be paid (rules vary from state to state). A trust does not go

through probate court. Consulting with an estate-planning attorney could be of immense value to a family's honor. A trust costs more to prepare than does a will, but the costs incurred in probating a will are uncertain and can be quite expensive. An attorney and a licensed financial consultant play key roles in transacting this important business.

Another area of obtaining funds or property under unfavorable circumstances is dishonesty: "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death" (Prov. 21:6). Little doubt is left about the end of those who take this route. An honest day's work for an honest day's wage is fair. People ought to be more concerned about their relationship to God than satisfying their employer just enough to remain on the payroll because the Bible says:

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart (Eph. 6:5-6).

Money Taken As A Bribe

"A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment" (Prov. 17:23). Income from a manipulated judgment is wickedness. The harmonious flow of society is dependent on valid judgment. More is at stake than the amount of money received in the despicable transaction.

Money Loaned At Interest

The Law of Moses allowed loaning money at interest to strangers, but not to the poor or to brethren (Exod. 22:25-27; Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 15:6-8; Deut. 23:19-20; Deut. 24:10-13; Deut. 28:12). The Law was being violated during the period of the exile, and those who were guilty received

censure from Ezekiel and later from Nehemiah (Ezek. 18:8; Ezek. 18:13; Ezek. 18:17; Neh. 5:3-13). The book of Proverbs is replete with warnings about loaning money at interest:

My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler (Prov. 6:1-5).

He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure (Prov. 11:15).

A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend (Prov. 17:18).

Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman (Prov. 20:16).

The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender (Prov. 22:7).

Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee? (Prov. 22:26-27).

Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman (Prov. 27:13).

He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor (Prov. 28:8).

In the parable of the talents, Jesus allowed loaning money at interest (Matt. 25:14-30). It was the unfaithful steward, the one-talent man, who lacked the courage to “put his money to the exchangers” so the lord could

have received his own with usury or interest. Therefore, loaning money at interest is not the problem. Abuse of the practice is the problem. Jesus brought the New Testament into being by shedding His blood for it (Matt. 26:28). In doing so He effectively “nailed the Law of Moses to the cross taking it away” as no longer binding upon mankind today (Col. 2:14). The New Testament is the Law for people today; the Old Testament is for our learning today (Rom. 15:4). Therefore, lessons very helpful to financial solvency still may be derived from the block of Scriptures in Proverbs presented above.

Observe an array of suggested lessons. One, exercise restraint, caution, and wisdom on entering into a financial contract (Prov. 6:1-5; Prov. 17:18; Prov. 22:26). Two, avoid entering into a financial contract with a “stranger,” i.e., someone with whom you are not familiar and have not established a basis of implicit trust (Prov. 11:15). Three, as the risk involved in a loan of money increases, the need for collateral to secure the loan increases (Prov. 20:16; Prov. 27:13). Four, the responsibilities and obligations that go along with loaning money should be taken seriously (Prov. 22:7). Five, never take unfair advantage of the poor (Prov. 28:8).

Summary

The passages in the book of Proverbs that deal with money may be grouped into eight categories, four generally positive in nature, and four generally negative in nature—that is, offering caution about the abuse of others in financial affairs. These eight categories are the following: money is a non-essential for true riches, money is not an end in itself, money should be put to good use, money as an instrument of generosity, money should not be put to evil use, money ill-gotten, money taken as a bribe, and money loaned at interest.



About The Author

Native of Tennessee. Married to Sheila, 2 children. Education: Naval Electronics Schools; Freed Hardeman University; SCU (M. A.). Local preaching: Rota, Spain; Decaturvill, TN; Hillsboro, TN; Memphis, TN. Editor: *The Spiritual Sword*. Director of Annual *Spiritual Sword* Lectures. Speaker: *The Truth In Love*, weekly radio program. Local Preacher: Getwell church of Christ, Memphis, TN since 1999.

CHAPTER 25

Wine In Proverbs

Michael McDaniel

Introduction

I*T IS AN HONOR* and pleasure for me to speak and to write a manuscript for the eleventh annual **POWER** Lectureship. Coming to the good Southaven congregation for the lectures is truly one of the highlights of the year for my family. We delight in being with Brethren Clarke, Jones, the elders, and the friendly members of this church.

I am thankful for the topic assigned to me. It is much needed. Recent news reports underscore the impact that the drinking of alcoholic beverages is having on our society, especially among our young people. Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse examined collegiate drinking and reported its findings in **The Commercial Appeal**, June 8, 1994. The report found that about one-third of all male and female college students drink primarily to get drunk. Among students under the legal drinking age of twenty-one, 47% report binge drinking in the previous two weeks.¹

In **The Commercial Appeal** on February 27, 2002, there was another report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. It said that nearly a third of high school students, 31%, say that they binge-drink at least once a month. The

president of the center said, “Underage drinking has reached epidemic proportions in America.” Underage drinking is illegal in this country, yet this report said that young people between the ages of twelve and twenty account for 25% of all alcoholic beverages consumed in the United States.²

If the instruction of the book of Proverbs would be imbibed by America’s youth instead of alcohol, what a positive difference it would make in the lives of many! Yet some continue to be deceived by alcohol: “Intoxicating drink promises happiness, burdens lifted, and problems solved, and strength but gives only misery.”³ When we lift the fog of deception, we can see that intoxicating beverages can harm your body, harm others, destroy your family, and destroy your soul (Gal. 5:21). Proverbs 20:1 says, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” How much wiser would we be if we would only accept God’s evaluation of alcohol?

Think how much better off our society would be without beverage alcohol. On April 19, 2003, there was an article in **The Commercial Appeal** entitled, “Village Sobers Up After Short-lived Liquor Sales.” Six months after voting to approve alcohol sales last fall, two native Alaskan villages, Pilot Station (pop. 500) and Atqasuk (pop. 250), have reimposed prohibition due to problems ranging from drunken public officials to a rise in sexual assaults. Abe Kelly, the Pilot Station postmaster and city councilman, said that their new freedom to drink came with a cost. Some parents were drinking up the family’s food budget, and teenagers went to community functions drunk. Two tribal-village police officers were fired for drinking on the job. In Atqasuk, Mayor Hollingsworth said a change was evident immediately when the town went “wet” last November. Some workers showed up late or skipped their jobs altogether. School attendance slipped. Students were

kept up late by partying parents or were exhausted from taking care of younger siblings.⁴

Does the preceding modern-day story not bear witness to the wisdom of Proverbs 23:20-21? “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.” It costs money to drink like a drunkard. People are brought to poverty by not showing up for work or not being able to hold their job. Sadly, many continue to be deceived, but the wise will leave it alone.

Our study will focus especially on two important passages in Proverbs: Proverbs 23:29-35 and Proverbs 31:4-7. Proverbs 23:29-35 is the most vivid description of the effect of beverage alcohol to be found in the Bible. This may be called “The Drunkard’s Looking Glass.” This passage enables drunkards to see themselves as they really are and as others see them.

Look At The Drunkard (Prov. 23:29-32)

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine (Prov. 23:29-30).

First, observe that strong drink **stupefies**. Half a dozen questions make us think and help us to see the drunkard for who he is. The sacred writer seeks to impress us with the pain and anguish of drunkenness by using questions which express pain and grief. Who has woe and sorrows? There are woes of body and mind; woes of one’s self and of others; woes of pain, disease, poverty, misery, disgrace, and ruin.⁵ Also suggested here is the result of the quarrelsome disposition which strong drink produces. There are contentions, complaining, fights, and even murders. There

will be wounds and injuries, and you will not know or remember how they occurred. There will be the redness of eyes. Now who is the person characterized by all of these things? “They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.” People may drink to drown their sorrows, but it will only plunge them into deeper sorrow. Emotional, dispositional, and physical problems all result from the use of intoxicating beverages.

Second, observe that strong drink **stings**:

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder (Prov. 23:31-32).

One day John Phillips ate in a restaurant where the paper placemats were designed to sell wine. The bold, red-and-white headline on them said, “Who’s Afraid To Order Wine?” There were columns of advice below. One was entitled, “The Tasting.” It told the timid what to do next:

When the wine is served, the following are the key tests you make before you approve the wine. **Appearance**—Hold the glass of wine by the stem up to the light. Wine should always be “bright,” not cloudy or murky. **Smell**—Swirl the wine a bit to give it some air (enable it to breathe), then smell it. It is correct to put your nose in several brief times so that the senses don’t become over-exposed. Bouquet is the aroma that is emitted from the wine. **Taste**—After you have really enjoyed the smell, take a good mouthful. Swish it around the mouth. Notice how it tastes as it rolls over the tongue, passing some of your keenest taste buds. A wine should never be sour or bitter.⁶

The whole idea of the placemats, of course, was to lure people into drinking. Yes, even the Bible says that wine can be attractive, and the fact that it glides smoothly down the throat adds to its allurements. But the sacred writer

warns us not to be deceived by the appearance and taste of the intoxicating liquid. For he says, “At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Prov. 23:32).

What is the significance of alcohol’s biting like a serpent and stinging like an adder? Some snakes bite or chew like the cottonmouth or water moccasin, whereas others strike like the rattlesnake or the cobra, using special fangs like needles. These reptiles also have different types of poison. The “biters” have a toxin that affects the nerves, while those that strike with fangs inject a substance that poisons the blood and vessels. Beverage alcohol operates in precisely the same way. It is considered to be both a neurotoxin and a hemotoxin, damaging both the nervous and the circulatory systems.⁷ The finest discussion of this may be found in the book **Contending For The Faith** by brother G. C. Brewer. He shows conclusively that “the serpent and adder simile is...found to be remarkably accurate from a scientific standpoint.”⁸

It is interesting that both the ASV and the NASV translate the word “venom” in connection with intoxicating beverages in Habakkuk 2:15. [From what I have been able to ascertain, it appears that there is a difference of opinion among the translators over the root word in the Hebrew which is translated “bottle” (*chemeth*) in the KJV. Some say it is taken from a word meaning “outpouring.” Some say it is taken from a word meaning “heat, wrath, or poison.” And some say it is derived from a word meaning “skin or wine bottle.” Part of the problem is that most of the meanings can fit the context.] Alcohol is definitely a poison. In fact, the very word “intoxication,” referring to the abnormal conditions produced by alcohol, is derived from the Latin term *toxicum*, meaning “poison.”⁹ Dr. Emil Bogen, a pathologist from California, has said:

No other poison causes so many deaths, or leads
to or intensifies so many diseases, both physical

and mental, as does alcohol in the various forms in which it is taken...It is the most dangerous poison widely used in the human diet.¹⁰

There can be no doubt that Proverbs 23:31-32 condemns drunkenness and that which leads to it—social drinking. One is not only to refrain from drinking such, but is not even to **look** upon it with **any** degree of approval when in its intoxicating stages.

Some have tried to justify social drinking by saying that Jesus made alcoholic wine at the wedding feast in Cana (John 2). However, the Bible word for wine (*oinos*) may refer to either fresh grape juice or a fermented beverage (Isa. 16:10; Isa. 65:8; Joel 2:24; Matt. 21:33). If they had been drinking alcoholic wine until it had run out, and Jesus made them that much more, then it would have made them drunker than ever! But the fact that the governor of the feast could taste and tell that the juice Jesus made was far superior in taste to the other proves that His taste buds were still active and that He had not been drinking alcoholic wine. Shame on those who would make a bootlegger and a bartender out of our Lord! One so good as He would not have sent a drunken bridegroom to his bride on their wedding night! **To say that Jesus made intoxicating wine at this wedding feast is to charge our Lord with sin (violating Prov. 23:20; Prov. 23:31-32)! He did not do that, for He was the sinless Savior and Son of God (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22-24).**¹¹

Learn From The Drunkard (Prov. 23:33-34)

First, notice what the drunkard **desires**: “Thine eyes shall behold strange women” (Prov. 23:33). Other versions say “strange things,” and it may be that the idea here is of hallucinations and imagining things. But it is also true that there is a well-established link between drinking and

immorality. Not only is one's physical vision blurred, but one's moral vision is blurred as well while under the influence of alcohol. How many men and women have sinned by committing adultery or fornication and ruined their marriages because of alcohol? The Federal Task Force on College Drinking recently "estimated that drinking by college students contributes to 70,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape. Also, 400,000 students between eighteen and twenty-four years old reported having had unprotected sex as a result of drinking."¹² Ninety percent of college rapes occur when either the assailant, the victim, or both have used alcohol.¹³ Sixty percent of college women diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease reported being drunk at the time they were likely infected.¹⁴

Concerning the two villages in Alaska mentioned earlier, after alcohol sales were approved, State Trooper Brian Miller said that the number of sexual assault cases rose from "maybe one or less a month to sometimes three in a week."¹⁵ Drinking robs a man of his self-control and reason.

As a Christian, you are commanded to be sober. 1 Peter 1:13 states, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The Greek word here is *nepho* and means "sober, temperate, abstinent in respect to wine."¹⁶ Our young people have to make important decisions. How can they do so if their decision-making ability is impaired by alcohol and other forms of drug abuse? Dr. Frederick Lemere, of the University of Washington School of Medicine, has said that some of the first cells anesthetized by alcohol are "those subserving the higher cerebral levels of will power and judgment. The brain reserve is gradually and insidiously whittled away."¹⁷ When a person drinks one beer or cocktail, he begins to lose his ability to discern right from wrong. It

is no wonder that more than 60% of all major crimes are done while the person is under the influence of alcohol. His conscience has been put to sleep! Christians must learn the value of soberness.

Notice what the drunkard **declares**: “Thine heart shall utter perverse things” (Prov. 23:33). The drunkard says things he would never dream of saying when he is sober. Psalm 5:9 states, “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.” There is a French proverb which says, “What the sober man thinks, the drunkard tells.” How many people have said things which they normally would never have said, had they been sober, thus destroying friendships?

Notice what the drunkard **does**: “Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast” (Prov. 23:34). The drunkard does the most foolish and fatal things imaginable. He can be in grave danger and be totally unaware of it. He can drown. The word “mast” refers to what sailors call the crow’s nest, where the lookout is stationed to watch for enemy vessels, reefs, and landfall. He could climb up to the crow’s nest on the mast of a ship and fall asleep. A fall from such a height would mean certain death. Consequently, by going to sleep on the job when he should have been keeping a watchful eye on the horizon, the drunkard would imperil the safety of the whole ship.¹⁸

Listen To The Drunkard (Prov. 23:35)

Notice what the drunkard **discovers**: “They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not” (Prov. 23:35). Look at how insensible he is to pain. He had been beaten, but did not know how or remember when. Was he in a fight? Did he fall down the stairs? Even when he is sober, his mind is so muddled that he cannot recall how he received his injuries.

Surely, we think that by now the drunkard will have learned his lesson, and, having discovered the evil effects of intoxicating beverages, will repent of his sin against himself, against others, and ultimately against God, and turn to drinking no more. But listen to what he decides: “When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again” (Prov. 23:35). Back to the bottle he goes! This is a true picture of the extent to which many go who indulge in intoxicating beverages. Alcohol often becomes addictive. Since current statistics say that one in ten who tries alcohol will become an alcoholic, think about this illustration. Would you be willing to board an airplane if the stewardess announced that one out of every ten of their planes crashed? Yet one in ten who tries alcohol will become an alcoholic. Addiction to strong drink was the undoing of Alexander the Great. He conquered the world before he was forty, but he died prematurely because he could not conquer his desire for alcohol.

Some have tried to justify social drinking by comparing 1 Timothy 3:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8. Elders are “not given to wine” (1 Tim. 3:3). Deacons are “not given to much wine” (1 Tim. 3:8). Therefore, some conclude that elders cannot drink at all but that deacons can drink a little. But what they do not know is that there are two entirely different Greek words here. The word in 1 Timothy 3:3 is translated “brawler” in the ASV because the one who drinks often becomes quarrelsome. It refers to the abusive conduct which often results from being under alcohol’s influence. But the word in 1 Timothy 3:8 is a different word from the one in 1 Timothy 3:3. It refers to the hold or addiction which wine has on those who freely drink it. The same word occurs in Titus 2:3. Aged women are not to be given to much wine. The word for “given” literally means “to enslave” and is so translated in the ASV. It reflects the addictive power of alcohol. It means

not having been enslaved to wine.¹⁹ So these two passages represent two different ways of issuing warnings about the danger of drinking alcoholic beverages. They give no encouragement whatsoever to social drinking. No one takes that first social drink with the intention of becoming enslaved by it. It is impossible to determine beforehand who will and who will not become an alcoholic. The only safe, harmless, and sinless course to follow regarding intoxicants is to abstain from them completely.

Brother Steve Higginbotham tells the story of a man he visited. The first time he saw him, he was in his house drinking a beer. Lying on the bed was a woman with whom he was living. Cigarette smoke was heavy in the air. This was not your typical story of a wasted life. You see, the man used to be a faithful Gospel preacher. He came from a Christian family, had graduated with a master's degree from a Christian university, had preached for several congregations, and was probably best known for the books and numerous tracts he had written. But the man began to drink. Often his wife would deceive the elders by telling them the reason he could not be at the Sunday morning worship service was because of his "sick headache." But actually, it was a hangover due to his drunkenness the night before. Then he began womanizing and destroyed his marriage. After turning his heart away from God, there he sat in a small, dark, smoke-filled room, drinking his beer, with his life in shambles. In the corner of the room were boxes containing the books and tracts that he had written. They stood almost as a monument of his prior usefulness to Christ. Eventually, the man died from complications of his drinking. Oh, the tragedy of a wasted life!²⁰

Lessons About Drinking (Prov. 31:4-7)

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings
to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest

they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more (Prov. 31:4-7).

What is the meaning of the instructions given to Lemuel? Does Proverbs 31:6 endorse drinking wine if you are depressed? If not, what does it mean?

This is the most difficult passage in Proverbs dealing with wine. Opinions are varied among brethren and non-brethren alike. What follows is written only after many hours of extensive research, intensive study, and consultation.

First of all, we see from Proverbs 31:4 that the king's mother advised him to stay away from alcohol. It would lead to bad judgment. This would affect the king and the people he governed. The Scriptures stress this repeatedly. For examples of this, one has to but remember Ahasuerus' bad judgement concerning Vashti at his drunken feast (Esth. 1) or the terrible decision which King Herod made which resulted in the death of John the Baptist (Mark 6:21-25). If the writer is Bathsheba, then she would have known firsthand about the perils of drunkenness. She could have had conversations with Abigail, who had once lived with a drunken husband named Nabal (1 Sam. 25:36). Surely Abigail would have had many stories to tell. But then, Bathsheba could also remember how that David had made her husband Uriah drunk so that he might lose his determination to abstain from sexual relations with his wife while his friends were fighting on the war front.

Second, while continuing the thought that the king must not drink wine, the mother says to her son in Proverbs 31:6, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts." What is the meaning?

Brother Bill Jackson wrote concerning this passage:

The idea of “giving” here is the idea of “letting such be typical” of men bent on an ungodly course such as those burdened down with problems and who turn to such for comfort rather than to the things of God, those in poor circumstances who seek solace in an ungodly manner, etc.²¹

Brother Jason Jackson wrote:

The king’s mother advised him to stay away from alcohol...By way of contrast, there are people who “drink to forget.” “Let them do it,” she says, “but as for you, manage the stress of your position to rule with equitable justice.”²²

Then yet another brother Jackson, Shan Jackson, wrote:

These verses are not giving sanction to drink, rather, they are showing how desperate men can become. These men are burdened down, but they turn to comfort[sic] when they should be turning to God. Whereas, using 1 Peter 4:4, Christians avoid such lifestyles.²³

This writer has chosen to follow a different line of interpretation than our three esteemed brethren by the name of Jackson. Why? Because, back in Proverbs 31:3, the mother had said, “Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.” Then she proceeded to mention the drinking of wine as a way in which kings are ruined. First you have “give not” in Proverbs 31:3. Then, you have “give” in Proverbs 31:6. The word for “give” is the same in the Hebrew in both places, except that one is in the negative. Obviously, these things are set in contrast. Since both statements are instructions for the king, how then can we make the second usage of “give” completely passive, as that of allowing others to do what they desire to do? It would appear, rather, that this is a direct instruction for the king to do something.

Another factor which leads this writer in another direction is that the great majority of commentators mention Mark 15:23 in connection with Proverbs 31:6. Mark 15:23 says, "And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not." Brother Shan Jackson does mention in his comments that "Some scholars also point this passage to the potion which was given to the condemned prior or during execution."²⁴ Adam Clarke, Franz Delitzsch, Matthew Henry, Albert Barnes, and others mention Mark 15:23. This is probably due to the fact that

the Jews say that upon this [Prov. 31:6, MM] was grounded the practice of giving a stupefying drink to condemned prisoners when they were going to execution, as they did to our Saviour.²⁵

The Talmud definitely interprets Proverbs 31:6 as a recommendation to give intoxicants to deaden the pain of those being executed. **Sanhedrin 43a** says, "Rab Ehisad has said, 'To him who went forth to be executed there was given a little frankincense mixed with wine to deprive him of consciousness.'"²⁶ Our Lord rejected that intoxicating drink and endured His suffering to the fullest, yet He did afterwards receive the nonintoxicating vinegar (John 19:29-30):

Had He imbibed the drugged wine, the Lord could not have spoken as He did on the cross and have made His death what it was.²⁷

He refused the narcotic, but accepted the refreshment.²⁸

Yet another factor bearing on the mind of this writer is the evidence of Hebrew parallelism in Proverbs 31:6. Please observe this statement from Donald Hunt on Proverbs 31:6-7:

[This is] Another case of Hebrew parallelism in which the latter statement is but a restatement of the first. In others words, the “bitter in soul” is the same as “him that is ready to perish.” We do utilize drugs and alcoholic-based medicines to relieve the afflicted in their final sufferings. If one overlooks the Hebrew parallelism here, he would end up having God advising the sorrowful to turn to booze. But life has proven that people who do that don’t “drown their sorrows;” it is more as Archie Word observes: “They only give them swimming lessons.”²⁹

This writer consulted with two scholarly friends who teach Hebrew, Joseph Meador (SWSBS) and Bob Cowles (ETSOP). Both were persuaded that this is indeed a case of synonymous Hebrew parallelism.³⁰ That means that both phrases in Proverbs 31:6 refer to the same person—to a person who is about to die. The text speaks of those who are perishing and of heavy heart, in poverty and misery. These terms describe a desperate, hopeless situation. One Hebrew Interlinear gives this literal rendering: “Give beer to one perishing and wine to one anguished in soul.”³¹ Therefore, this writer is inclined to understand this verse as the Jews understood it, as dealing with someone who is dying of excruciating agony:

Summing up, Proverbs 31:6 does not recommend a moderate use of alcoholic beverages for the purpose of pleasure. Rather, in an ironical fashion, it suggests that alcohol is fit only to kill the excruciating pain of someone who is dying.³²

The king was instructed to give or permit alcohol for this purpose. As one who authorized capital punishment, this information would be helpful to the king. Brother Jeffcoat wrote:

Although alcohol was long prescribed as a tonic, a sedative, and a soporific, its traditional role in medicine has now been taken over largely by

the barbiturates, minor tranquilizers, and other sedatives and hypnotics. It should be observed that in antiquity the range of pharmaceutical products was much more limited than in modern times.³³

Regardless of which view you take in regard to Proverbs 31:6-7, this much is absolutely clear. There is no justification here or elsewhere in the Bible for social drinking at all!

Conclusion

And what about the Christian today? As Jason Jackson well said:

If a king needs clear thinking and sound integrity, serving the civil interest of people, does not the Christian need sober thinking and virtuous influence in serving the spiritual interests of people (cf. Matt. 5:13-16; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 2:11-12)?³⁴

It is wrong to get drunk. The one who does so will not inherit the kingdom of heaven unless he repents:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these...drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Paul wrote, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). On the surface, this looks like a condemnation of staggering-down-the-street, can't-remember-what-happened-last-night-drunkenness. But, upon further study, it proves to be more. Young's says that drunk (*methusko*) here means "to begin to be softened" with wine.³⁵ Vine's says it marks the process of the state of drunkenness.³⁶ Drunkenness is a process,

not so much a result. These Greek definitions establish beyond all doubt that there are degrees to drunkenness. If I drink three beers, then I am three-beers drunk. If I drink one beer, than I am one-beer drunk.

1 Peter 4:3 is a passage which illustrates degrees of drunkenness. It represents the abuses of wine in a series of words that depicts stages in transgression. Social drinking is definitely condemned in 1 Peter 4:3. Peter wrote, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." Notice three phrases in particular in 1 Peter 4:3. First, there is "excess of wine." This is from a compound word. The first part means "wine," and the second part means "to bubble up or overflow." Here is a vivid picture of drunkenness. Second, there is the word "revellings." This word was first used innocently for village merrymaking, but it later came to be applied to drinking parties. It is the midway point in drinking. Third, there is the word "banqueting." This word refers to drinking matches, in which each participant sought to outdo his drinking companions.³⁷ This sounds just like what goes on in bars and taverns today. Here we have the social drinker! Wayne Jackson said that this word "denotes a drinking party, but as R. C. Trench noted, 'not of necessity excessive...but giving occasion for excess'—and yet it is condemned!"³⁸ No conscientious Christian would want to dabble with beverage alcohol in any of these degrees.

Christians must not drink alcoholic beverages. Pray for the courage to overcome this temptation. We ought to avoid the company of those who indulge in it lest they put temptation in our way:

How well do I remember.
It was late in last December
When my mind began to flutter
And I fell into a gutter.
And a hog came and laid down by my side.

While we lay there in a puddle,
 My mind began to muddle.
 A lady passing by was heard to say,
 "You can tell the man who boozes
 By the company he chooses."
 And the hog got up and walked away.³⁹

Friends, be wise. Stay away from alcohol. "Be not among winebibbers!"

Endnotes

1 Brooke A. Masters, "More College Women Drinking To Get Drunk, Study On Abuses Finds," **The Commercial Appeal** (Memphis: Scripps-Howard, June 8, 1994), pp. A1, A12.

2 "Group's Report Says Alcohol Use Rising By Teens: But How Much?," **The Commercial Appeal** (Memphis: Scripps-Howard, Feb. 27, 2002).

3 Benny Bristow, **Thinking With Solomon** (Abilene, TX: Quality, 1992), pp. 137-38.

4 "Village Sobers Up After Short-lived Liquor Sales," **The Commercial Appeal** (Memphis, TN: Scripps-Howard, April 19, 2003).

5 "The Folly of Intemperance," **Adult Gospel Quarterly** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, Winter 1978), p. 52.

6 John Phillips, **Exploring Proverbs**, Volume 2 (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1996), p. 243.

7 Wayne Jackson, **Notes From The Margin Of My Bible**, Volume 1 (Stockton, CA: Courier, 1993), p. 96.

8 G. C. Brewer, **Contending For The Faith** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1971), pp. 270-71.

9 W. D. Jeffcoat, **The Bible And Social Drinking** (Corinth, MS: Robinson Typesetting, 1987), p. 103.

10 As quoted by W. D. Jeffcoat, "Christian, Abstain From Social Drinking!," **The Spiritual Sword**, Volume 4 (Memphis: Getwell church of Christ, January 1973), p. 20.

11 Garland Elkins & Robert R. Taylor Jr., **Social Drinking: Unjustified, Unsocial, Unwise, Unscriptural** (Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ, 1986), pp. 18-22.

12 "Booze Toll High Among Collegians," **The Commercial Appeal** (Memphis: Scripps-Howard, April 10, 2002).

13 Masters, p. A1.

14 Ibid, p. A12.

15 "Village Sobers Up" (2003).

16 Joseph Henry Thayer, **Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament** (Grand Rapids, MI: 1977), p. 425.

- 17 Jeffcoat, **Spiritual Sword**, p. 21.
- 18 Phillips, p. 254.
- 19 Ralph Earle, **Word Meanings In The New Testament** (Peabody, MA: 1986), p. 414.
- 20 Steve Higginbotham, "The Tragedy Of A Wasted Life," **South Green Street Church of Christ Weekly Newsletter**, Volume 17 (Glasgow, KY: South Green Street church of Christ, July 13, 1998).
- 21 Bill Jackson, ed., **The Book Of Proverbs** (Austin, TX: Southwest, 1988), p. 411.
- 22 Jason Jackson, "Does The Bible Recommend Drinking Alcoholic Beverages?" (<http://www.christiancourier.com/questions/drinkingAdvisedQuestion.htm>), p. 2.
- 23 Shan Jackson, "Alleged Contradictions And Problems In Psalms And Proverbs," **Old Testament Difficulties And Alleged Contradictions**, ed. Jerry Moffitt (Portland, TX: Portland church of Christ, 1995), p. 212.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Matthew Henry, **Matthew Henry's Commentary**, Volume 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), p. 801.
- 26 **Sanhedrin 43a**, cited in Heinrich Seeseman, "Oinos," **Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament**, Volume 5, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: 1968), p. 164.
- 27 Jeffcoat, **The Bible And Social Drinking**, p. 63.
- 28 Ibid, p. 67.
- 29 Donald Hunt, **Pondering The Proverbs** (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1974), p. 425.
- 30 For a study of Parallelism see Thomas L. Seals, **Proverbs—Wisdom For All Ages** (Abilene, TX: Quality), pp. 14-20.
- 31 John R. Kohlenberger, III, **The Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), p. 567.
- 32 Samuele Bacchiocchi, **Wine In The Bible** (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2001), p. 204.
- 33 Jeffcoat, **The Bible And Social Drinking**, p. 115.
- 34 Jason Jackson, p. 3.
- 35 Robert Young, **Young's Analytical Concordance To The Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdman's), p. 275.
- 36 W. E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words** (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1966), p. 341.
- 37 Guy N. Woods, **I And II Peter, I, II And III John, And Jude** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1983), pp. 108-09.
-

38 Wayne Jackson, **What About Moderate Social Drinking?** (<http://www.christiancourier.com/questions/socialDrinkingQuestion.htm>), p. 5.

39 Douglas F. Parsons, **Victorious Christian Living** (Searcy, AR: Resource, 1986), p. 115.



About The Author

Native of Tennessee. Married to Martha (Wallace), 2 children. Graduate: Memphis School of Preaching in 1985. Local preaching: TN, KY, MO. Author: *The Christian's Relationship To The Old Testament*, tract. Editor: *Expositions Of The Expositor, J. Winfred Clark*. Instructor: Online Academy of Biblical Studies (OABS). Local preaching, Central church of Christ, Caruthersville, Missouri since 1998.

CHAPTER 26

Abominations In Proverbs

Garland Elkins

Introduction

THE ABOVE IS A great assignment. It is in order to define our subject. By “abominations” we offer the following definitions as given by **Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary**: “Anything abominable; any thing greatly disliked or aborred, intense aversion or loathing; detestation. A vile, shameful, or detestable action, condition, habit, etc.” By “in Proverbs” we simply mean one of the great books of the Bible, as given to us by the Holy Spirit as He inspired Solomon to write the book. Solomon, like all inspired men, wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). The book of Proverbs begins with, “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel” (Prov. 1:1). The Holy Spirit is the author, and Solomon is the penman.

We now call attention to the Proverbs in the book of Proverbs which deal with things, attitudes, and actions which are abomination to the Lord.

“For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous” (Prov. 3:32). The crooked man is abomination to the Lord, but God has an intimate relationship with the upright. David raises the question, “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who

shall dwell in thy holy hill?" (Psm. 15:1). By inspiration he answers the question:

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved (Psm. 15:2-5).

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16).

Now we shall devote some time and space to each of these.

1. **"A proud look":** This haughty, exalted, lofty, self-righteous attitude is the very opposite of what God requires. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). An interesting situation along this line is in Matthew 20:20-28:

Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wouldest thou? She saith unto him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto him, We are able. He saith unto them, My cup indeed ye shall drink: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my

Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Paul wrote:

Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others (Phil. 2:3-4).

2. **“A lying tongue”**: When one lies he is imitating his father the devil. Jesus said:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

Like begets like. Jesus said that liars (those who do not repent of such) will be lost:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

Let us note things some liars will do. A liar adds to God's Word (Prov. 30:6). God classifies a liar below a poor man (Prov. 19:22). A liar is one who says that he has not

sinned (1 John 1:8-10). A liar denies Christ (1 John 2:22). A liar says that he loves God but hates his brother (1 John 4:20-21). A lying tongue seeks to deceive by perverting the truth.

3. **“And hands that shed innocent blood”:** The life of the flesh is in the blood (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11). It is a fearful thing to shed blood. God has decreed that civil authorities are to punish evildoers, even to the extent of execution in capital cases (Gen. 9:5-6; Matt. 26:52; Rom. 13:3-4). Abortion is an excellent example of this abomination; it is murder of little babies, the shedding of innocent blood. Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest promoter and performer of abortions, strongly supports this grisly practice. They have stated, “We at Planned Parenthood are outraged that Congress is continuing to intrude into difficult and private medical decisions best left to women, families and doctors.” God has always opposed murder, and his opposition to murder is “best left” to Him!

4. **“An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations”:** This describes many about whom we read in the Bible (Gen. 6:5; Mic. 2:1-3). Men have often attempted to come up with something new, but they cannot outsmart God (Eccl. 1:9-10). The time will come when all must stand before God to give account, and that is a solemn, sober thought (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-8; Eccl. 12:13-14; 1 Tim. 5:24).

5. **“Feet that be swift in running to mischief”:** We should be very eager to avoid sin: “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil” (Eccl. 5:1). Isaiah wrote of some in his day and said, “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths” (Isa. 59:7). We all need to follow the inspired advice of the

inspired James: “Ye know this, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19).

6. “A false witness that speaketh lies”: God has always opposed false witnessess. He opposed this under the Law of Moses: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exod. 20:16). Paul wrote, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). This sin defiles one (Matt. 15:19); it puts us in bad company (Mark 14:55-59).

7. “And he that soweth discord among brethren”: “Discord” is strife, quarreling, contention, and trouble. It is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). It is very difficult to stop, and it often leads to other sins. The Hebrews writer wrote, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Heb. 12:15). James wrote:

But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish (Jas. 3:14-15).

It is hated by the Lord, and forbidden by Him. David wrote:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore (Psm. 133:1-3).

Paul said, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33).

Instead of strife we should strive to do God's will. Jesus said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24). We should "strive" together, not against each other (Phil. 1:27).

Instead of sowing discord, we should do all within our power to bring about perfect unity and peace as demanded by our Lord in the Scriptures (Matt. 5:9; John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 12:18; Rom. 14:19). We are to be proclaimers of God's truth (1 Pet. 3:15). Our feet should be swift to do God's will (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15). We should devise good plans to carry the Gospel to the lost (Mark 16:15-16), to care for the needy (Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27), and to edify one another (Rom. 14:19). Our tongues should be used to preach the Gospel, and our feet to take it to the lost (Rom. 10:10-18).

"For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips" (Prov. 8:7). If everyone spoke the truth, there would be no error. All wickedness is an abomination. Therefore, a righteous person purposes to speak only the truth and never error. The world desperately needs the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The Word of God is truth. In our Lord's longest recorded prayer to the Father, He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The truth, when obeyed, sets men free from sin. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Our souls are purified in obeying the truth: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22). Therefore, we should "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23:23).

“A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight” (Prov. 11:1). God’s law governs man’s dealings with his fellow man. He requires that we treat each other fairly. In ancient days some merchants used more than one set of scales in selling, and another set when they were buying. This kind of business dealing God abominates:

A just weight and balance are the Lord’s: all the weights of the bag are his work (Prov. 16:11).

Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord (Prov. 20:10).

It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth (Prov. 20:14).

Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good (Prov. 20:23).

God said to the Israelites:

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt (Lev. 19:35-36).

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?” (Amos 8:4-5).

The basic principles of the Gospel forbid dishonesty, but delight in fair and honest practices. God takes note of honesty and dishonesty, and He will reward all accordingly (Matt. 7:12; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 6:27-36; Phil. 4:8). Paul

sets forth this principle in these words: “that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified” (1 Thess. 4:6). Solomon wrote:

They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight (Prov. 11:20).

Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight (Prov. 12:22).

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness” (Prov. 15:8-9). The manner of life conducted by the wicked is abominable to God; therefore, it is not strange that his worship is rejected. On the other hand, the Lord loves the one who follows a life of righteousness. The way we live has much to do with our worship and our acceptability to God.

“The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words” (Prov. 15:26). In this passage the Lord speaks against pride, as he has done before in Proverbs. He denounces this trait of character. In the previous verse, he says, “The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow” (Prov. 15:25). Unfortunately, it is the case that many widows in numerous societies have been neglected, defrauded, and abused. The Lord has always been concerned for the welfare of the widow. He provided for Naomi and for Ruth, her faithful daughter-in-law. Through His providence He made her to be a part of the lineage of the Savior. He also took care of the prophet’s widow (2 Kings 4:1-7).

He also blessed the Shunamite woman (2 Kings 4:8-26). In the New Testament, He gave instructions for His people to care for the fatherless and widows (Acts 6:1-7; Jas. 1:27; 1 Tim. 5:16; Gal. 6:10). The Lord takes note of our thoughts. If our thoughts are allowed to become evil, then we become susceptible to living them out in our lives, for we are what we think (Prov. 4:23; Prov. 23:7).

“Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished” (Prov. 16:5). In his pride, man often, in his own thinking, exalts himself to a position equal to God. As an example we read:

Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God (Ezek. 28:2).

We can do nothing without Him; we are “without God, and without hope” (Eph. 2:12). Jesus said, “for apart from me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Man can neither create nor destroy an atom of matter. God “giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). God “giveth life to all things” (1 Tim. 6:13). Regardless of how many proud persons may rise up in unison, joining hand in hand in their opposition to God, it will be God Who will be victorious (Gen. 11:1-9).

“It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness” (Prov. 16:12). When kings engage in wickedness, not only do they corrupt their own lives, but their influence will be great for evil upon their own people.

A wicked king may reign for years, but sooner or later his throne will either be usurped, or death will take him away. Many kings have lost their thrones because they became evil. Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Herod, and numerous other kings fall into that category.

“He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17:15). Those who do not follow the Bible are often guilty of the above: “Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:10). When a nation’s judicial system degenerates to the point that justice is perverted in favor of the criminal and against the innocent, unless that trend is reversed, its days are numbered. When those who stand for truth are ostracized and those who promote error are exalted, that person, congregation, group, or nation is facing the greatest peril of its life.

“The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?” (Prov. 21:27). The sacrifice of the wicked is considered by the Lord to be an abomination. This should cause multitudes to tremble. Great numbers in the denominational world, and several in the church, appear to think that they can live ungodly lives, but that, when they come to the assembly to God, He will accept their worship. The Bible repudiates such a concept and practice in no uncertain terms.

God had instructed Cain and Abel, the first two children born to Adam and Eve, how to worship (Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17). Cain was wicked and therefore his worship was rejected:

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy

countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him (Gen. 4:3-7).

Why was Cain's offering rejected? For two major reasons—he did not offer his worship according to God's directions, and he was wicked: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). David wrote, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psm. 66:18). Solomon wrote that "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 28:9).

"The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men" (Prov. 24:9). God has nothing good to say about those who devise evil in their hearts. Such a person's actions are hated by the Lord (Prov. 6:18): "He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person" (Prov. 24:8). There are some people who "sit in the seat of the scornful" (Psm. 1:1). Neither God nor right-thinking people appreciate such a person's attitude: "When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart" (Prov. 26:25). There are people who, even though they speak pleasant words, do not mean them for good. Paul warned the church at Rome of that type:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent (Rom. 16:17-18).

“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Prov. 28:9). The denominational view that God saves a sinner simply because he says, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” is false to the core. Denominational preachers encourage the lost to “pray the sinner’s prayer,” and they convince many that it is all that is required in order for them to be saved from their alien sins. On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, after the lost had heard Peter preach a powerful Gospel sermon, they cried out and asked, “What shall we do?” Peter did not tell them just to “pray through to pardon.” Instead, he told them what false teachers would not tell them: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). After Saul had seen the Lord and was convinced that he was a sinner, the Lord told him to “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). Three days later Ananias told him, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). He was not told to “pray through to pardon” or just to “pray the sinner’s prayer.” The blind man was right when he said, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth” (John 9:31).

“An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked” (Prov. 29:27). To a righteous man, an unjust man is an abomination. To a wicked man, a just man is abomination. The righteous man seeks the salvation of the wicked. Paul had great sorrow because of the serious problem of the lost because of sin:

That I have great heaviness and continual
sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself

were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:2-3).

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved (Rom. 10:1).

On the other hand, the wicked seek the hurt of the righteous (Rom. 8:7):

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Eccl. 12:13-14).¹

Endnote

1 Outlined commentary on Proverbs available from Bob Winton, 464 Ridgewood Drive, Manchester, Tennessee, 37355.



About The Author

Native of Tennessee. Married to Corinne, 3 children. Attended: Freed Hardeman College, Middle Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee. Local Preaching: VA, TN. Author and/or Editor of several books; tracts. Co-editor: *Yokefellow*. Co-author: *Elkins-Ross Debate*. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Appeared on Phil Donahue in 1984 defending what the Bible teaches on church discipline. Current instructor and in charge of Public Relations at Memphis School of Preaching.

CHAPTER 27

The Attributes Of God In Proverbs

Dub McClish

Introduction

TO SPEAK OF THE attributes of God is to speak of His characteristics, His traits, His abilities, and, to a certain extent, His nature. Unworthy and finite human beings must ever approach such a study with unalloyed humility. The attitudes of humility and meekness should characterize one's attitude who would attempt to understand Him Who alone is infinite. He not only possesses certain traits, but He is flawlessly perfect in each of them.

That having been said, it is necessary to investigate and understand the characteristics of Deity insofar as He has revealed Himself to men. A grand aim of all of God's revelation to us is to draw us to His likeness. Jesus urges us to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).¹ As He Who called us is holy, we are also to be holy (1 Pet. 1:15). To become Godlike, we must understand everything we can about the attributes of God.

The book of Proverbs is just that—a book of inspired proverbs on a wide range of subjects. It was not written to serve as a textbook on the attributes of God. However, in the course of its broad scope of subject matter, it expresses several of the Divine characteristics. We can only be blessed by examining them.

The Omnipresence Of God

The doctrine that Deity is always everywhere and that nothing escapes His notice is all but impossible for mortals to fathom, but it is often emphasized in the Word of God. Solomon did not overlook this attribute of God in writing his Proverbs. Proverbs 5:21 declares, “For the ways of man are before the eyes of Jehovah; And he maketh level all his paths.” Proverbs 15:3 is somewhat of a commentary on the previous passage: “The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, Keeping watch upon the evil and the good.”

Proverbs 5 is devoted almost entirely to warnings against sexual immorality. The words of Proverbs 5:21 are a solemn reminder that, though one may conceal his sin from friend and family, his behavior is ever “before the eyes of Jehovah.” The New Testament counterpart to these passages is Hebrews 4:13: “And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

While the sinner should dread the thought that the eyes of God are everywhere all the time, the Lord’s people can rejoice in the knowledge that His eyes take notice of them: “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister” (Heb. 6:10). It is quite possible that these verses provided the inspiration for the spiritual song, “There’s An All-seeing Eye Watching You.” May this attribute of God discourage us from evil even as it encourages us in godliness.

The Omniscience Of God

The following statements in Proverbs set forth the concept of God’s omniscience:

Sheol and Abaddon are before Jehovah: How much more then the hearts of the children of men! (Prov. 15:11).

Deliver them that are carried away unto death, And those that are ready to be slain see that thou hold back. If thou sayest, Behold, we knew not this; Doth not he that weigheth the hearts consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his work? (Prov. 24:11-12).

For one to be able to know the mysteries of Sheol and Abaddon and to know so as to “weigh” correctly the hearts of men, He must be omniscient.

The omniscience of God speaks of the absolute fullness of His knowledge about everything that is knowable. This trait is made possible in part because of God’s omnipresence. Were He not everywhere all of the time, something might occur where He is not, thus escaping His knowledge. God’s omniscience implies His perfect knowledge not only of things present, but of things past and future as well. Actually, God does not think in terms of past, present, or future, or in terms of time at all. All things in all ages are ever before the Divine mind in one great panorama. If there is anything whatsoever that He does not know, then He is merely “almost” omniscient, which possibility the doctrine of the Bible does not allow.

The Compassion And Benevolence Of God

If we had no more than some of the statements in Proverbs, we could know that God is compassionate and benevolent:

Jehovah will root up the house of the proud; But he will establish the border of the widow (Prov. 15:25).

Rob not the poor, because he is poor; Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate (Prov. 22:22).

Remove not the ancient landmark; And enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their Redeemer is strong; He will plead their cause against thee (Prov. 23:10-11).

The poor man and the oppressor meet together; Jehovah lighteneth the eyes of them both (Prov. 29:13).

God's compassion is shown in His concern for widows, the poor who are oppressed and afflicted, and orphans. His benevolence is demonstrated in His care for those who have no one else to care for them or to plead their own cause. Obviously, the gracious, giving heart of God does not allow Him to delight in the suffering of mankind, including the least esteemed among them. God's benevolent spirit is further seen in certain unconditional gifts which He gives. He gives light to the eyes of saint and sinner alike, even as He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45).

It was this same compassionate and benevolent nature that caused Him to look down upon wicked and lost men and provide a Savior and salvation for them. The Gospel writers frequently describe the compassion our Lord had upon various persons and even multitudes of them. We must ever seek to emulate this wondrous attribute of Deity.

The Justice Of God

God's perfect mercy and compassion are balanced by His perfect justice, which receives major emphasis in Proverbs:

Jehovah will root up the house of the proud; But he will establish the border of the widow (Prov. 15:25).

Jehovah is far from the wicked; But he heareth the prayer of the righteous (Prov. 15:29).

All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes;
But Jehovah weigheth the spirits (Prov. 16:2).

A just balance and scales are Jehovah's; All the
weights of the bag are his work (Prov. 16:11).

The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for
gold; But Jehovah trieth the hearts (Prov. 17:3).

Say not thou, I will recompense evil: Wait for
Jehovah, and he will save thee (Prov. 20:22).

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; But
Jehovah weigheth the hearts (Prov. 21:2).

The righteous man considereth the house of the
wicked, How the wicked are overthrown to their
ruin (Prov. 21:12).

The eyes of Jehovah preserve him that hath
knowledge; But he overthroweth the words of
the treacherous man (Prov. 22:12).

If thou sayest, Behold, we knew not this; Doth
not he that weigheth the hearts consider it? And
he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it?
And shall not he render to every man according
to his work? (Prov. 24:12).

For there shall be no reward to the evil man;
The lamp of the wicked shall be put out (Prov.
24:20).

The great God that formed all things both
rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors
(Prov. 26:10, KJV).

Notice the various facets of God's justice: (1) He
destroys the proud, but preserves the lowly; (2) He turns
away from the wicked but hears the righteous; (3) He
weighs hearts and spirits with just weights; (4) He tries
hearts; (5) He recompenses evil; (6) He overthrows the
wicked and the treacherous; (7) He renders to all according
to their work; (8) He will extinguish the lamp of the wicked;

and (9) He will reward fools and transgressors according to their sins.

The tendency of men is to emphasize the compassion and benevolence of God and to de-emphasize or even deny the justice of God. However, the same God who gave His Son to save us will also judge all mankind through that Son:

He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

No one will miss the great day of reckoning when God's perfect justice will at last right all wrongs, reveal evil for what it truly is, and banish it forever to eternal Hell:

For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

The Sovereignty And Authority Of God

Several statements in Proverbs reflect the sovereignty of God:

Jehovah hath made everything for its own end; Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil (Prov. 16:4).

The lot is cast into the lap; But the whole disposing thereof is of Jehovah (Prov. 16:33).

The name of Jehovah is a strong tower; The righteous runneth into it, and is safe (Prov. 18:10).

The horse is prepared against the day of battle; But victory is of Jehovah (Prov. 21:31).

God's sovereignty is His absolute authority, dominion, and rule. The Bible depicts Him as possessing unrivaled

and unquestionable authority. The Father has placed this authority in the hands of His Son, which placement Daniel foresaw:

I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

The ascension Daniel foretold is the same one that Peter described on Pentecost:

This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified (Acts 2:32-36).

He has the Divine right to control all things. There should be dread and fear in this fact for those who live in rebellion to God and His Son. However, the righteous find hope, consolation, and security in God's absolute authority.

The Creative Power Of God

Sovereignty and authority belong to Him because He created all things:

The plans of the heart belong to man; But the answer of the tongue is from Jehovah (Prov. 16:1).

The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, Jehovah hath made even both of them (Prov. 20:12).

The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, Searching all his innermost parts (Prov. 20:27).

There is no rational explanation for the material universe and all of the life that occupies it apart from an omnipotent Creator Who Himself is eternal and never had a beginning. To this cause nature is a witness, and the Bible testifies on almost every page. Humankind can be very obtuse at times. Many so-called educated people marvel at the fathomless heavens and at the complexity of their own bodies. Yet they blithely say that it “just happened” by inexplicable and non-reproducible “natural” processes. One simple statement of Scripture provides the logic of the matter: “For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God” (Heb. 3:4).

The Wisdom Of God

God’s ultimate and perfect wisdom is revealed to some degree in His natural creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psm. 19:1). The glorious church Jesus established demonstrates “the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). However, the fullest revelation of God’s wisdom is in the Bible. The book of Proverbs speaks of the wisdom and truth that abide in Deity alone:

When a man’s ways please Jehovah, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. 16:7).

A man’s heart deviseth his way; But Jehovah directeth his steps (Prov. 16:9).

There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Jehovah (Prov. 21:30).

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; But the glory of kings is to search out a matter (Prov. 25:2).

Every word of God is tried: He is a shield unto them that take refuge in him. Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:5-6).

The revealed will of God is so filled with wisdom, that, when one lives by it, his righteous life may even silence his enemies. Men ever stray from God, and, did we not have the revelation of His will, we would be hopeless wanderers in the earth: "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). God knew that man was incapable of self-direction, so He gave us the direction we need in His Word.

It is fully sufficient to provide every spiritual need that men have:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

We need no additional direct help from the Holy Spirit besides the vast sources of strength, wisdom, and fruit-bearing God has given us in His Word. It is quite fully able to take us to our heavenly home if we will but live by it: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the **word** of his grace, which is **able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance** among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32, emp. mine, DM).

God's Word is tried and true. It has stood the test of time and of multiple assaults that have attempted to destroy it, but it still stands. We dare not add to it or alter it in any way. The warning John issued concerning the words of his Revelation apply in principle to the entire sacred volume:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto

him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

God has revealed His will to us. Let us ever be content to abide by it with never a thought of changing it in any respect.

Conclusion

There are almost countless valuable gems of Truth in the book of Proverbs. Among those gems are the glimpses we are given of the attributes of God. May we learn these attributes well and ever hold them before our eyes as models for our lives.

Endnote

1 All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.



About The Author

Native of Texas. Married to LaVonne (James), 3 children, 7 grandchildren. Graduate: Freed Hardeman College, Abilene Christian College (B. A.). Local preaching: ID, TX, AL, KY, NM. Editor: *Gospel Journal*, Author, editor, debater, publisher and speaker in gospel meetings and lectureships in several states, Jamaica, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia. Since 1992 he has been devoted full-time to preaching in Gospel meetings, mission trips, lectureships, and in writing and publishing sound Biblical materials. Director of Annual Lectureship in Schertz, TX.

CHAPTER 28

Kings/Rulers In Proverbs

Barry Grider

Preface

THE *SOUTHAVEN CHURCH OF CHRIST* and the esteemed director of the **POWER** Lectures, B. J. Clarke, are to be commended for the selection of this year's study, "The Sayings of Solomon: Pearls From the Proverbs." Last year's theme, "The Sayings of Jesus," could not have been more enriching. Who can resist focusing upon the words of our Lord? However, we shall also be profited greatly by listening to Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, with the exception of Christ, Who was more than a man (John 1:1-3; John 1:14). Jesus said on one occasion, "behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31). Yes, the passage speaks of Jesus' superiority over Solomon, but, also, our Lord attests to the greatness of Solomon, in His estimation and others.' Jesus made mention earlier in the passage how that the queen of Sheba "came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." Most importantly, Bible students should spend much time in Proverbs, for it, too, belongs to Christ.

When your life on earth is over, perhaps there will be much you shall regret. However, having studied your Bible will not be regretted. This writer for many years has read a chapter in the book of Proverbs every day. I always select the chapter that corresponds with the day

of the month. Since most months have 31 days, one can read through Proverbs once a month, twelve times in a year. The wisdom that is gleaned is so beneficial to everyday life. Who among us will deny that man needs more wisdom? Those alive now are living during an information explosion. One gets all the facts on any subject just by keying in a few letters on the computer. Furthermore, young people have so many opportunities today to get a higher education that allows them to fill their minds with so much knowledge about so many different subjects. Yet despite all of the information and knowledge at our disposal, man is not any wiser. Murder, thievery, hatred, divorce, alcoholism and drug abuse, along with false religions and cults, are increasingly widespread. Information and knowledge will not solve these dilemmas; only Divine wisdom will be able to do so.

Introduction

This writer has been asked to ponder the book of Proverbs and deal extensively with its teaching regarding kings and rulers. The subject of government is rooted in Biblical teaching. In America, our citizens, from childhood, have equated our nation with freedom, liberty, justice, and righteousness. These terms did not originate with our founding fathers; however, they speak volumes about these men. These terms are very familiar to the children of God because we read of them often in His holy Word. In the year of Jubilee, God told Moses, “proclaim **liberty** throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof” (Lev. 25:10, emp. mine throughout, BG). Paul wrote, “Stand fast therefore in the **liberty** wherewith Christ hath made us **free**” (Gal. 5:1). Listen to the Psalmist: “Justice and judgement are the habitation of thy throne” (Psm 89:14). For these terms to have been the bedrock of our system of government, our founders must have known something about the Bible:

[I]t is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible...he is worse than an infidel who does not read his Bible and acknowledge his obligation to God (George Washington).

The Bible is the best book in the world (John Adams).

I have always said and always will say that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers, better husbands...the Bible makes the best people in the world (Thomas Jefferson).

Cultivate an acquaintance with and a firm belief in the Holy Scriptures. This is your certain interest (Benjamin Franklin).

Is it proper for governmental leaders to look to the Bible for guidance? Many similar questions are being asked today. Likewise, we hear the constantly echoed statement, “we must respect the separation of church and state.” This is a relatively new concept advanced by so-called “first-amendment advocates.” However, there is no clause in the first amendment, nor anywhere else in the Constitution, calling for the separation of church and state. The first amendment simply stated, “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

In other words, there was not to be a state-mandated religion in America, as was in England. However, religion would indeed play a vital role in public and in private life and was not in any way to be prohibited.

Why allow the Bible to be used as a guide for governments? God ordained government. In fact, He has ordained three institutions to benefit mankind: the home, the church, and the nation. Each serves a particular role, and each functions differently, yet all serve the purpose of God. Some principles, however, that apply to the home do

not apply to the church or nation. Some principles that apply to the church do not apply to the home or nation. Therefore, some principles which apply to the nation do not apply to the home and church.

For example, Jesus said, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39). This is a kingdom principle. It involves personal relationships and the reaction of the one wronged to the one who has wronged him. However, this principle does not apply to parents and children in the home. If a child "backtalks" his parents, should Mom and Dad just "turn the other cheek"? Absolutely not! God demands that we correct our children (Prov. 29:17).

The church does not discipline by way of physical force (2 Thess. 3:14-15). However, government has the right to punish lawbreakers by administering physical punishment, if deemed appropriate, with relevance to the crime committed (Rom. 13:3-4). So while each of the institutions is different, they all serve a unique purpose, which is ordained by God. He has principles by which He expects nations to abide. The responsibility of the government is to regulate its own behavior and that of its citizenry in accordance with God's Divine principles found in His Word. That is the reason that "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach unto any people" (Prov. 14:34).

God rules in the affairs of men. He said to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the most powerful man on earth at the time:

And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will (Dan. 4:32).

While most rulers regard their power as a result of their own accomplishments, no one sits in a position of authority without the permission of God. Furthermore, the passage makes clear that God can remove one from office, as well. Paul wrote, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: **the powers that be are ordained of God**" (Rom. 13:1).

Therefore, we learn that (1) God established governmental authority; (2) no one sits in positions of authority without His permission, and (3) He removes those He so chooses from their positions of authority.

All of this being true, God has ordained principles by which He expects kings, rulers, emperors, presidents, and so forth to follow, or else face His condemnation and judgment. We shall consider these principles as follows: the **kindness** of kings, the **knowledge** of kings, the **righteousness** of rulers, and the **respect** for rulers.

The Kindness Of Kings

In his inaugural address, January 20, 1989, President George H. W. Bush stated that his vision for our nation was "a kinder, gentler America." Many political conservatives were astounded by this statement. To many of them, the president's words reinforced the image that he was somewhat "wimpish," despite a record that proves otherwise (e.g., he was shot down by the enemy in World War II). In my judgment, President Bush spoke volumes about himself. Though he had been granted great power, he desired to deal kindly and gently with all men. Furthermore, he went on to say, "let us use government to help people." God will bless leaders who have such an attitude.

Many who have been given positions of authority down through the ages live by the motto "might makes right." As far as they are concerned, meekness is always

associated with weakness. Yet, as we have often been reminded, meekness is “strength under control.” A king who demonstrates kindness will win the hearts of the people. His subjects will love, respect, and even die for him. An oppressive ruler will eventually be brought down, if not by outside force, by his own people. Remember the wise words of the old men of Israel to Rehoboam, Solomon’s son:

And King Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, how do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever (1 Kings 12:6-7).

Of course, Rehoboam rejected this wise counsel and paid sorely.

At an earlier time, when Moses first approached Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go, the arrogant and defiant king of Egypt not only refused to let them go, but commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying:

Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves...Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard vain words (Exod. 5:6-7; Exod. 5:9).

However, Pharaoh paid for this cruelty and for snubbing the will of Jehovah God, as his entire host was drowned in the midst of the Red Sea (Exod. 14:27-28).

What then assures a king of the favor of God? “Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy” (Prov. 20:28). How marvelous is the combination of mercy and truth (Psm. 85:10)! These two Divine qualities

flow forth from the throne of God, and by mercy and truth we are saved (Tit. 3:5; John 8:32). Therefore, one should not be surprised that God upholds the earthly throne that is established upon the same principles.

Toward whom should the king be kind? First, he should be kind toward those who do right. Wicked rulers should listen carefully to the following: “Also, to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity” (Prov. 17:26). This passage is a parallelism, and “princes” in the latter clause refers not to position but one of noble character. Sometimes we compliment another by saying, “He is a prince of a man.” A good king will uphold what is right and be kind toward those who do right. Punishment is for the evildoer, not the good citizen (Rom. 13:3-4). In fact, those who sit in positions of authority have the responsibility of protecting good citizens from evil. Even a child realizes when he has been wrongfully punished. Yet, since we live in a society that is bent on calling “evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter” (Isa. 5:20), no wonder there are so many inequities in our justice system. Likewise, who can forget about innocent babies who die through abortions because political leaders do not have the courage and strength to oppose this infanticide?

Second, kings should be kind to the poor and needy. Hear these words of admonition: “Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy” (Prov. 31:9). Far too many who have reached the highest echelons of power have forgotten their roots. No one has more opportunity to help the less fortunate than the one who holds the reins of power. It seems the principle stated in Luke 12:48 would apply here: “For unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” In

the spiritual realm, Jesus pleads the cause of those who cannot help themselves (1 John 2:1). Likewise, those who sit in positions of authority have the responsibility to defend those who cannot defend themselves. While there is much abuse in our tax system, most Americans understand that the government should require tax dollars to help our fellow citizens who, for legitimate reasons, are struggling and downtrodden.

It is true there are those who will take advantage of such kindness: “Many will entreat the favor of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts” (Prov. 19:6). However, God’s favor is upon the ruler who shows favor toward the poor: “The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established forever” (Prov. 29:14). His throne will be perpetuated.

What about a king who is not kind? The writer of Proverbs says, “As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people” (Prov. 28:15). No one wants to come face to face with a beast that is out for prey. So a king who does not care for the poor is likened unto these vicious animals. He is out to devour them and what belongs to them. He robs them of their children, plunders their land, and takes away their dignity. Again, we read, “The king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favor is a dew upon the grass” (Prov. 19:12). Just as the dew is welcome in the dry season, so a kind king is refreshing toward those oppressed.

Like Rehoboam, the king who is unkind to his subjects is unwise: “The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days” (Prov. 28:16). Notice, again, what preserves the king’s throne.

What should the righteous remember when the ruler of the land is not kind, but evil, and the people likewise are evil?

When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall...Many seek the ruler's favor, but every man's judgement cometh from the Lord (Prov. 29:16; Prov. 29:26).

Do not rebel nor become disheartened. Do not seek vengeance. The Lord will judge all men, including all those in authority (Rev. 20:12).

The Knowledge Of Kings

When Solomon became king over Israel, he prayed unto God:

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing (1 Kings 3:9-10).

It is good to pray for wisdom (Jas. 1:5). With so much responsibility given to rulers, for sure they need guidance from above. For this reason, rulers should seek the counsel of God, as did Solomon. His prayer was answered. His wisdom is clearly displayed when two harlots come before him, each one claiming that she is the mother of a particular child (1 Kings 3:16ff). Solomon's call, "Bring me a sword" (1 Kings 3:24), caused his fame to spread far beyond his own kingdom (Luke 11:31).

With regard to a king's knowledge, his people expect him to be sound in judgement: "A divine sentence is in the lips of a king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgement" (Prov. 16:10). A king's word is final, and often his word, among many nations and cultures, is said to be a dictum from above (God speaking through the king).

Furthermore, what the king does not know, his people expect him to resolve to know and to work out an answer to any dilemma:

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable (Prov. 25:2-3).

A king who cares very little for the welfare of his people will disregard knowledge. Such will bring about his own demise: “For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged” (Prov. 28:2). History has proven that, where royal families, political parties, and military tribunals did not seek Divine counsel, their countries have always been in a state of upheaval, never enjoying stability, with power always changing hands. Likewise, most of these nations have never enjoyed any degree of prosperity, and, more regrettably, have never had access to the Gospel.

The king who seeks knowledge will also be perceptive. Often our leaders make decisions that are foolish, and, through these decisions, they demonstrate their refusal to seek Divine help. Some do not know how to use the intelligence God has given them. However, a king who seeks wisdom from above will be able to discern clearly between right and wrong, good and evil. Solomon had this in mind when he wrote, “A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes” (Prov. 20:8). Since he is perceptive of evil, he quickly seeks to drive it far away from his people (Prov. 20:26). Once this is accomplished, the king brings peace to the land (Prov. 29:4; Prov. 29:8).

The Righteousness Of Rulers

If one is interested in righteousness, he is interested in doing right. Often politicians will give lip service to honesty, character, and integrity. However, many in public office are self-serving and have little regard to what is

right. One who understands righteousness will seek out the Divine standard for righteousness, God's holy Word.

Righteous rulers bring blessings to the people: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Prov. 29:2). The people rejoice because freedom, prosperity, tolerance, justice, and equity abound under a righteous ruler. The nation of Iraq has recently been freed from the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein. As a result, that nation's citizens have been rejoicing in the streets of their cities (cf. Prov. 28:12; Prov. 28:28).

Righteous rulers enrich the land: "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right" (Prov. 16:8). Some things money cannot buy. Though a nation may fill its coffers full, without morality a nation will fall. The founding fathers' words of wisdom ought to be heeded today. Our system of government will only work for a moral people. The governor of Tennessee, Phil Bredesen, recently signed legislation establishing a lottery in Tennessee. Often those promoting this evil have said, "Just think about the added revenue it will bring." Little thought has been given to the fact that gambling is robbery by mutual consent and, along with gambling, there is an increase in poverty and crime. However, even if gambling did produce great revenues, I would be opposed because it violates the principles of right.

Righteous rulers bring honor to the nation: "It is abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness" (Prov. 16:12). It has often been said concerning our leaders during the last decade, "I do not care about his character, as long as he can do the job." I would submit to you that a leader cannot do the job without character. A righteous ruler (one committed to the principles of right) understands the enormity of his position and his influence upon so many. A nation will

often take on the character of its leader. Therefore, those who sit in positions of authority understand that their public and private behavior is of utmost importance (and the general populace does, as well).

Righteous rulers respect those who do right: “Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right” (Prov. 16:13). A righteous ruler understands that honest people can only be beneficial to him. Those who are wicked will undermine him, envy him, and lie to him, while seeking his demise (Prov. 25:4-5; cf. Prov. 29:12). Therefore, he honors not those who do evil (Prov. 18:5), but good. The reputation and demeanor of the righteous citizen appeal to the righteous ruler (Prov. 25:15):

He that saith unto the wicked, thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them (Prov. 24:24-25).

Right-thinking people are rightly appalled when evil men are honored; therefore, a righteous ruler will respect those who do right (Prov. 22:11).

Righteous rulers fear God: “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it withersoever he will” (Prov. 21:1). How sad to see a ruler lift up himself and forget there is a God! How refreshing to find a ruler who understands that he or she is not really sovereign! It is said that, whenever Queen Victoria of England heard the hymn “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name” sung or played, she would remove her crown in deference to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Such was truly honorable!

A ruler can lead his people to greatness or cause them to collapse, not just because of his ability or inability to handle the affairs of state, but also because of how he

handles the affairs of his heart. The importance of moral character in the life of the king is clearly seen in the following passage:

Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more (Prov. 31:3-7).

The book of Proverbs is replete with warnings about perverse women and strong drink. The lives of many individuals who had great potential for good have been destroyed because of no control over lustful desires. How sad indeed for a man to rise to lofty positions and be brought low because of his own immorality! His demise will not only destroy him personally, but also bring much reproach upon the nation.

Respect For Rulers

Peter wrote, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **Honor the king**" (1 Pet. 2:17). The most patriotic, respectful, and law-abiding citizens should be Christians. America has been blessed down through the years with great people. Our people have been great because, for most of our history, the principles of the Bible have been employed and enforced. Many have desired to enter our borders as Lady Liberty, with her shining torch, has cried out to those yearning to breathe free. Unlike political leaders in oppressed lands, our governing officials can take pride that many desire entrance into our country. The wise man wrote, "In the multitude of people is the king's honor: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince" (Prov. 14:28).

However, there are those who do not appreciate God's standard for the home, church, or civil government. Thus we are reminded:

My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both? (Prov. 24:21-22).

As we think about our rulers, what ought to be our attitude toward them? First, let us obey them. Obviously, if called upon to do that which is not authorized by God, we must resist all (Acts 5:29). However, we have a responsibility to obey civil authorities. Even if I do not like the speed limit or do not desire to pay taxes, I must be obedient to the powers that be. Remember Jesus' words, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's" (Luke 20:25). Of course, the law-abiding citizen has the respect and appreciation of a righteous ruler, for such citizens bring peace and stability to the land. Likewise, the lawbreaker faces the wrath of governmental authorities (Prov. 14:35; Prov. 16:14-15; Prov. 20:2).

Second, citizens should honor their rulers. President Reagan was so respectful of the office he held that he refused to take off his coat while in the Oval Office. In turn, we should hold in high esteem those who sit in high places. It takes special people to lead well. We have all seen the negative effects of unqualified individuals in positions of leadership: "Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes" (Prov. 19:10).

Conclusion

It is true that many kings and rulers are not kind, knowledgeable, righteous, or deserving of respect. Some are even deceitful (Prov. 23:1-3). There is one thing every

Christian can do, regardless of his nationality. Each Christian can pray for his leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-2). He can be a good example (Matt. 5:16; Phil 2:15). Those living in free societies should vote. Furthermore, let us not be shy or ashamed to preach to our nation (Isa. 58:1) and call upon our leaders and fellow citizens to uphold Biblical principles. We must remind them that, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).



About The Author

Native of Alabama. Married to Celia (Cason), 2 children, expecting third in September. Graduate: University of Alabama: Memphis School of Preaching. Local preaching: AL, TX, TN. Former editor of Christian Worker Monthly periodical and Annual Southwest Lectures. Gospel meetings and numerous lectureships yearly. Traveled through Southeast Asia preaching the gospel. Preaches at Forest Hill church of Christ.

CHAPTER 29

Miscellaneous Proverbs

Dave Watson

Introduction

Thanks

I WANT TO BEGIN BY expressing thanks to brother B. J. Clarke for inviting me to participate in this eleventh annual **POWER** Lectureship. I also want to express thanks to the Southaven congregation for the good work they render by having and hosting this lectureship.

Theme And Title

The theme for this series of lectures and lessons centers on “The Sayings of Solomon: Pearls from the Proverbs.” The title for this lesson is “Miscellaneous Proverbs.”

Task

It will be my task in this lesson to study the twenty-three proverbs listed below and to explain their original meaning and modern-day application.

Technique

The technique used will consist of an examination of (1) the verse, (2) the variant, (3) the view, (4) the verification, and (5) the value. First, we will read the verse listed as a

miscellaneous proverb. Second, we will give a variant reading of said proverb from another version of the Bible. Third, we will view the original meaning of the proverb. Fourth, we will give verification of such by providing a Biblical example of the proverb. And, fifth, we will set forth the value of the proverb by making a modern day application.

Proverb Number One

Verse And Variant

“Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox” (Prov. 14:4). The Revised Standard Version (hereafter, RSV) renders this verse: “Where there are no oxen, there is no grain; but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.”

View And Verification

This proverb relates to the proper method of doing business. Producing abundant crops of grain or much increase necessitates having and using the right machinery (“the strength of the ox”) and tools. Having these things more than pays for their initial purchase and upkeep. This is verified by Israel being told, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (Deut. 25:4).

Value

One application of this proverb relates to the paying of preachers and/or elders who labor in/for the Lord’s business. Paul wrote concerning the payment of preachers: “For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?” (1 Cor. 9:9). He wrote concerning the payment of elders: “For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. 5:18).

Proverb Number Two

Verse And Variant

“The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy” (Prov. 14:10). The RSV translates this verse as follows: “The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares its joy.”

View And Verification

This proverb has to do with the heart of a man and who can know what is in that man’s heart. Only that man can know the bitterness or joy of his own heart. No stranger can know another man’s bitterness or joy of heart unless and until such is revealed to him. Thus Paul wrote, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” (1 Cor. 2:11).

Value

This particular proverb has a general application and a special or specific application. The general application relates to our not being able to know and judge what is in another’s heart without such being revealed. Jesus, because He is omniscient, knows the hearts of all men: “He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (John 2:24-25). We are not omniscient, and thus we are told, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). The special or specific application, made by Paul, related to not being able to know the heart (mind) of God unless and until God revealed such by inspiration:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of

God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:11-16).

Proverb Number Three

Verse And Variant

“Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness” (Prov. 14:13). The RSV records this as “Even in laughter the heart is sad, and the end of joy is grief.”

View And Verification

This proverb is concerned with the kind of laughter and joy that leaves the heart sad and in grief in the end. Such laughter and mirth was experienced by Belshazzar, who, in the days of Daniel:

made a great feast...drank wine...[and] commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein (Dan. 5:1-2).

But his laughter and his mirth and his joy turned to sorrow and grief when:

In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and

his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another (Dan. 5:5-6).

The end of this matter was pronounced by Daniel when called upon to interpret the writing. Daniel said:

This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians...In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain (Dan. 5:26-28; Dan. 5:30).

Value

One application of this proverb relates to the story of the rich man who, in this life, “was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day” (Luke 16:19). But when he died, he was told by Abraham, “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented” (Luke 16:25). His laughter and his joy were now sadness and grief. James tells us how to avoid such while we are still in this life:

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (Jas. 4:8-10).

Proverb Number Four

Verse And Variant

“The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty” (Prov. 18:18). The RSV records it as “The lot puts an end to disputes and decides between powerful contenders.”

View And Verification

This proverb deals with the settling and ceasing of disputes and contentions by the casting of lots: “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord” (Prov. 16:33). Such was done to divide the promised land among the tribes of Israel (Josh. 14:1-5) and to select Matthias as an apostle to replace Judas (Acts 1:26).

Value

The application of this proverb is found in the principle set forth. We do not, today, cast lots because such disposing of the Lord has “failed,” it has “ceased,” it has “vanished,” it has been “done away,” and it has been “put away” (1 Cor. 13:8-11). Today, that which causeth contentions to cease and puts an end to disputes concerning things that pertain to life and godliness is God’s Word. Such is “according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3).

Proverb Number Five***Verse And Variant***

“Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out” (Prov. 20:5). The RSV has the following: “The purpose in a man’s mind is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.”

View And Verification

This proverb relates again to the heart or mind of man and how the counsel or purpose that is deep therein can be drawn out. God gave Solomon counsel and understanding such as no other man had (1 Kings 3:12). Solomon’s “proverbs” have been drawn out of such deep water:

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings (Prov. 1:1-6).

Value

One application of this proverb can be seen in Jesus, Who was/is greater and wiser than Solomon (Matt. 12:42), and “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). He has made available to man “living water”:

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:10-14).

Proverb Number Six

Verse And Variant

“Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?” (Prov. 20:6). The RSV reads as follows: “Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but a faithful man who can find?”

View And Verification

This proverb is concerned with finding a faithful man with true loyalty. Most or many men proclaim that they are faithful and loyal, but proclamation is one thing, and performance is another. A self-righteous Pharisee once proclaimed his own goodness and loyalty to God, saying, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:12). Yet the Lord said that he was not justified before God and then added, "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luke 18:14).

Value

The application of this proverb is seen in the example of the publican who is contrasted with the self-righteous Pharisee. His proclamation was faithful in that he, "standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Jesus then said concerning him, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14).

Proverb Number Seven***Verse And Variant***

"Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Prov. 20:9). The RSV states this verse in exactly the same words as does the King James Version.

View And Verification

This proverb deals with the heart of an accountable man and whether that man's heart can be said to be clean or pure from sin. The Biblical answer is an emphatic "No!" Solomon said, "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live" (Eccl. 9:3).

For this reason, he also said, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Prov. 28:26).

Value

The application of this proverb is seen in the New Testament teaching concerning the heart of man. Paul wrote:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:10-18).

Thus, no man today can say that his heart is clean and pure from sin. That is, no man today can say that he, himself, has made his heart clean and pure from sin. It is only by means of the mercy and grace of God made available to us through Jesus Christ that man can be saved from sin by being born of water and of the Spirit to become an heir who has the hope of eternal life:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Tit. 3:5-7).

Proverb Number Eight

Verse And Variant

“The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head” (Prov. 20:29). The RSV

says, “The glory of young men is their strength, but the beauty of old men is their gray hair.”

View And Verification

This proverb centers on a contrast between young men and old men and their respective glory and beauty. The glory and beauty of young men is their strength, whereas the glory and beauty of old men are their heads of gray hair. Thus Solomon said, “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness” (Prov. 16:31).

Value

One application of this proverb is in recognizing that “bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). The person who recognizes this truth, whether their hair is gray or not, whether they have any hair or not, is indeed a wise person.

Proverb Number Nine

Verse And Variant:

“To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice” (Prov. 21:3). The RSV has instead: “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.”

View And Verification

This proverb concerns a man being acceptable to the Lord. Being acceptable to the Lord is dependent on such things as justice and judgment and righteousness and sacrifice. These things can be placed under the two headings of attitudes and actions. Peter stated, “But in every nation he that feareth him [attitude], and worketh righteousness [action], is accepted with him” (Acts 10:35).

Value

The application of this particular proverb can be seen in the Lord's repeated statement, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matt. 9:13; Matt. 12:7). A wrong attitude (wanting to be seen of men, Matt. 6:1) makes a right action (giving alms, praying and fasting, Matt. 6:2; Matt. 6:5; Matt. 6:16) unacceptable. A wrong action (persecution of Christians, Acts 26:9-11) makes the right attitude (a good conscience, Acts 23:1) unacceptable. King Saul learned that sacrifice cannot be substituted for disobedience. He was told by Samuel, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Proverb Number Ten***Verse And Variant***

"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Prov. 22:28). The RSV has the exact same wording, except that the phrase "thy fathers" becomes "your fathers."

View And Verification

This proverb relates to honest and ethical dealings with landmarks and boundaries previously set by others. Honest, ethical people do not remove such. In Joshua 13-21 the landmarks and boundaries for the tribes of Israel were set by God through Joshua for the people. These landmarks and boundaries were not to be removed.

Value

The application of this proverb relates to spiritual matters as well as physical. God has laid out landmarks and boundaries in His Word that are not to be removed. Jesus told His apostles, "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever

ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18). Any addition or subtraction one way or the other is forbidden:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Proverb Number Eleven

Verse And Variant

“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (Prov. 24:10). The RSV has the same wording, except that “thou” and “thy” become “you” and “your.”

View And Verification

This proverb deals with the size or level of one’s physical strength, which, when large keeps one from fainting. However, if the size or level of that strength is small, one will faint in the day of adversity.

Value

The application of this proverb relates to one’s spiritual strength, which is needed to keep one from fainting. Jesus once “spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). But to pray always requires strength, and strength requires faith. Thus, the Lord asked the question, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Proverb Number Twelve

Verse And Variant

“Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house” (Prov. 24:27). The RSV rendering is, “Prepare your work outside, get everything ready for you in the field; and after that build your house.”

View And Verification

This proverb concerns one’s priorities and the order in which things are to be done. There is work to be done without (or outside) in the field, and there is work to be done to build one’s house. The wise man says to get everything ready first outside in the field and afterwards to build your house. The reason for this priority and order is obvious. It is the work outside in the field that provides the increase needed so that one can build a house. This was Solomon’s priority and order in building first the house of the Lord and then building his own house (1 Kings 6-7).

Value

The application of this proverb for us is found in a spiritual application made by the Lord Himself: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

Proverb Number Thirteen

Verse And Variant

“As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters” (Prov. 25:13). The New American Bible translates this verse, “Like the coolness of snow in

the heat of the harvest is a faithful messenger for the one who sends him. He refreshes the soul of his master.”

View And Verification

This proverb speaks of one being a faithful messenger. Just as the coolness of snow would refresh one in the heat of harvest, a faithful messenger refreshes the soul of his master who is the one who sends him. John the Baptist was a faithful messenger of the Lord (Matt. 11:10-11).

Value

The application of this proverb for us relates to our faithfulness in proclaiming the message of Christ. In this respect may we be faithful ministers like Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7), Epaphras (Col. 1:7), Onesimus (Col. 4:9), and like Paul, who said, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12).

Proverb Number Fourteen

Verse And Variant

“Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it” (Prov. 25:16). The RSV reads as follows: “If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you be sated with it and vomit it.”

View And Verification

This proverb teaches us to control the appetites. In this case it has to do with the eating of honey. One can control his appetite and eat so much as is sufficient, which is to eat only enough, or one can continue to eat to the point of being sated with it, or filled therewith to the point

where he will vomit it up and out. This is a condemnation of gluttony. Thus Solomon also said, "It is not good to eat much honey" (Prov. 25:27).

Value

The application of this proverb is found in its admonition that we control our appetites. A more modern-day application of this general idea is made by John, who said:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Proverb Number Fifteen

Verse And Variant

"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint" (Prov. 25:19). The RSV reading of this verse is, "Trust in a faithless man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips."

View And Verification

This proverb relates to putting our confidence in some other man in time of trouble. Our confidence can be placed in a man who is faithful or in a man who is unfaithful/faithless. Placing our confidence in an unfaithful or faithless man is like trying to eat with a broken or bad tooth, and like trying to walk with a foot that slips out of joint. Just as having a bad or broken tooth makes it difficult to eat, and just as having a foot that slips out of joint makes it difficult to walk, so an unfaithful or faithless man makes

it difficult to deal with the trouble that prompted you to place your confidence in him in the first place. The Psalmist once placed his confidence in an unfaithful man: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psm. 41:9).

Value

The application of this proverb can be seen in the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. Jesus spoke of this saying, “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me” (John 13:18).

Proverb Number Sixteen

Verse And Variant

“As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart” (Prov. 25:20). The American Standard Version rendering is, “As one that taketh off a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon soda, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.”

View And Verification

This proverb compares three actions. The first action is taking off or taking away a garment in cold weather. The second action is putting vinegar on nitre or upon soda. The third action is singing songs to a person with a heavy heart. It does not help one to keep warm by taking off clothing in cold weather. Such an action does more harm than good. Vinegar and soda are not compatible, and thus putting vinegar on nitre or soda causes a reaction. And singing songs to a person with a heavy heart does not always help but instead sometimes hurts and causes an

adverse reaction. David is an example of one who tried to soothe the heavy heart of King Saul, but

Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night (1 Sam. 19:10).

Value

The application of this proverb is that we need to have the wisdom to do the right thing at the right time. This is illustrated by Paul's statement, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15).

Proverb Number Seventeen

Verse And Variant

"As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come" (Prov. 26:2). The RSV translation is, "Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, a curse that is causeless does not alight."

View And Verification

This proverb speaks of three things. First, it speaks of a bird, a sparrow, wandering and flitting. Second, it speaks of another bird, a swallow, flying. Third, it speaks of a curse that does not alight. Some are constantly wandering and flitting and flying around without ever landing or alighting anywhere. Some people are also carelessly cursing other things and other people without cause. A man named Shimei once cursed David when he was fleeing from his rebellious son Absalom (2 Sam. 16:5-13). When David later returned in triumph, Shimei confessed his sin and was spared from death by David (2 Sam. 19:16-23).

Value

The application of this proverb is seen in a statement made by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount concerning our view of those that would curse us without cause:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:11-12).

Proverb Number Eighteen**Verse And Variant**

“Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him” (Prov. 26:27). The RSV reading is, “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back upon him who starts it rolling.”

View And Verification

This proverb speaks of a man digging a pit for someone or something else, but instead he ends up falling into it himself. It also speaks of a man who starts a stone rolling toward someone or something else, only to have it end up rolling back upon himself. So it was that Haman, the hangman, had a gallows made for Mordecai (Esth. 5:14). But Haman, himself, ended up being hanged on the gallows he had made for Mordecai (Esth. 7:10).

Value

The application of this proverb is seen in the New Testament teaching that whatever we sow is what we shall reap:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap

corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7-8).

Proverb Number Nineteen

Verse And Variant

“The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet” (Prov. 27:7). The RSV says, “He who is sated loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.”

View And Verification

This proverb is contrasting a soul that is filled or sated with a soul that is hungry. The full and sated soul loathes food (honey/honeycomb) whereas the hungry soul desires food so much that even something bitter tastes sweet to him. We have already verified this point in our short study of Proverbs 25:16 and Proverbs 25:27.

Value

The application of this proverb to spiritual matters can be seen in one’s desire for the Word of God being compared to one’s desire for the sweetness of honey. The Psalmist said, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psm. 119:103). The Lord added His blessing and promise to this idea by saying, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).

Proverb Number Twenty

Verse And Variant

“As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man” (Prov. 27:19). The RSV record of this verse is, “As in water face answers to face, so the mind of man reflects the man.”

View And Verification

This proverb tells us that, when a man looks into a pool of water, he can see his own face clearly. It also tells us that, when a man looks into his own heart and mind, he can clearly see what kind of man he is. Solomon made this point when he said, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). He said again, “A man’s heart deviseth his way” (Prov. 16:9). He concluded, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

Value

Jesus made an application of the principle of this proverb when He said:

[F]or out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things (Matt. 12:34-35).

Proverb Number Twenty-One***Verse And Variant***

“As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise” (Prov. 27:21). The RSV states this verse, “The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is judged by his praise.”

View And Verification

This proverb points out that silver is judged by the crucible or fining pot. It also points out that gold is judged by the furnace. In the same way, a man is judged by his praises. Such judgment would be based upon who was praising him. Thus Solomon said, “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Prov. 27:2). A man would be judged as wicked if wicked men were praising him because “they that forsake

the law praise the wicked” (Prov. 28:4). Virtuous people are praised by other virtuous people and their virtuous works:

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her (Prov. 31:28).

Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates (Prov. 31:31).

Value

One application of this proverb is that, although we should be concerned about receiving the praise of good men rather than wicked men, we should be even more concerned with having the praise of God than we are with having the praise of men. We should be like those of whom Paul spoke, “whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:29).

Proverb Number Twenty-Two

Verse And Variant

“A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer” (Prov. 29:19). The RSV says, “By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not give heed.”

View And Verification

This proverb deals with discipline. One form of discipline is verbal. But some servants will not be corrected by mere words. Even though they understand what they have been told, some will not give heed. Thus, with some, other forms of discipline are needed:

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him (Prov. 22:15).

Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die (Prov. 23:13).

Value

The application of this proverb concerns God's correction of His spiritual children: "For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Prov. 3:12). The Hebrews writer makes a New Testament application of this Old Testament passage:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Heb. 12:5-11).

Proverb Number Twenty- Three***Verse And Variant***

"He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length" (Prov. 29:21). The RSV gives this rendering of the verse: "He who pampers his servant from childhood, will in the end find him his heir."

View And Verification

This proverb also deals with discipline, as did the previous one. If a servant is not disciplined but is instead

delicately brought up and pampered from childhood, he will be spoiled. And a spoiled person expects and even demands more and more, up to and including the master's inheritance. A Biblical example of this is seen in the parable of the prodigal son, who wanted and then wasted his inheritance (Luke 15:11-24).

Value

One application of this proverb has to do with viewing ourselves as servants, even though we are sons of God. Jesus made this point in a parable:

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do (Luke 17:7-10).



About The Author

Native of Missouri. Married to Peggy Lee (Comstock), 3 children. Graduate: Florida School of Preaching, Southern Christian University. Local preaching: numerous churches in Florida. Associate Editor: *The Gospel Journal*. Spoken on a number of Gospel meetings and lectureships. Conducted 3 Debates. Prison/jail work. Local Preacher, Walnut church of Christ, Sapulpa, OK.

Part Five

**The
Conclusion
Of The
Matter**

this page left intentionally blank

CHAPTER 30

The Sayings Of Agur (Proverbs 30)

Gary Colley

Preface

THE **POWER LECTURESHIP** HAS been a source of Scriptural and extensive study of the Bible for the past decade, and now it is our prayer that it continues a second decade and beyond! The elders; B. J. Clarke, Director; as well as all of the supportive members of the Southaven church of Christ are to be commended highly for their love for the Truth and the brotherhood. Providing these studies will live on in the lives of future generations, as the book is studied, the tapes are heard, and the impressions of the Truth of God are imbibed.

Introduction

Although Solomon is credited by most with writing the book of Proverbs, like David is to the writing of Psalms, the last two chapters of Proverbs are identified in the text as being written by Agur (pronounced “Aw-goor”), son of “Jekeh the oracle,” and Lemuel, the writer of Proverbs 31. Though we are given the background of many of the writers of the Bible, there are some about which we know very little or nothing. Concerning Agur, the ascribed writer of Proverbs 30, we have only conjecture beyond what is written here about his life and the time in which he lived.

Confession Of Faith

His words here, however, seem to fit in perfectly with the wisdom of Solomon, as Agur makes his confession of faith in God—that he was a seeker of God—and his observations about life. He appears to have had an insatiable desire to be satisfied or appeased, insofar as his interest in the wisdom and knowledge of God. His writing adds to the practical ethics revealed in the rest of the book of Proverbs. Acknowledging that a proverb is a short few words, revealing evident wisdom and truth to our minds in quick order, the briefly concise teaching of this chapter is likewise absorbed quickly by the mind.

Practical Proverbs

The practical life that Christians are to live will be greatly enhanced by this study (Rom. 12:1-2). Thus, the book of Proverbs is the most profitable help in practical living for both young and old. The book not only contains Divine commandments, but is also a record of tested and tried experiences from which we may benefit (cf. Phil. 4:11-13). One thought reigns above all in Proverbs 30: we are assured of finding great security in trusting in God (Prov. 3:5-6; Prov. 30:5).

Perpetual Proverbs

Proverbs 30 and 31 are considered by most as a supplement or an appendix to Solomon's writing. The truths presented in these chapters are extensively illustrated by examples given in other portions of the Bible. What wonderful teaching can be gleaned from the study of Proverbs! The imparted Divine instruction demonstrates the sometimes unusual way of teaching by the Orientals. Their thoughts are at times given in riddles, obscure questions, or sayings which may at times be difficult of explanation. In our study of the sayings of Agur, we will

find many profound truths worthy of acceptance in the life of those striving to go to heaven. His insatiable desire to live in harmony with the Will of God is given for our learning and admonition (Rom. 15:4).

Exposition Of The Sayings Of Agur In Proverbs 30

Proverbs 30:1: These words are identified as “the words of Agur the son of Jakeh.” Agur and his father are known only in this way. From these names and the style of writing, we know that this chapter is not in the words or way of Solomon. The words “prophecy” or “vision” in the Old Testament have to do with and mean revelation given to inspired men (Hos. 4:6; Prov. 29:18).

Proverbs 30:2: Agur here makes his confession of faith in God, and expresses his realization that he is far below God in perfection. “Brutish” is a word expressing his feeling that he is dull and stupid in comparison to God. This is a lesson that we all must learn and remember for a successful Christian life.

Proverbs 30:3: Agur’s humility is clearly shown in his acknowledgement of God’s superiority in knowledge and wisdom. He says he had neither “learned wisdom” from those recognized as teachers of his day, nor had developed wisdom to the extent of considering himself to have been equal in knowledge with the holy God.

Proverbs 30:4: It is here accepted that he nor we ourselves are to attempt to be the counselors of God. We must remember that He is the Creator while we are the creatures of His hand. God is an eternal being, Whose presence is everywhere and above all in wisdom and knowledge. We are reminded here of the questions asked of Job by his “friends” and God (Job 11:7-10; Job 15:7-9). Paul reminds us in the book of Romans:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Rom. 1:18-22).

Proverbs 30:5: The Word of God is pure and purified. His Word is always to be seen as the absolute, clear, inerrant, verbally inspired, God-breathed avenue of Truth, with no admixture of man's thoughts (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is the protection or shield of the man of God: "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psm. 84:11). The one who abides therein will have the care of God to protect, counsel, and guide him through life.

Proverbs 30:6: God places a curse on every one who adds to or subtracts from the words of His Book (Rev. 22:18-19). The creeds of men are either more or less than God's Holy Word, and therefore not to be followed. God's Word is all sufficient and should be final to settle every question of authority in religious matters (Matt. 28:18-20).

Proverbs 30:7-9: Agur's prayer has two points: (1) That the Lord should not deny him before he dies because he has wickedly failed to set his heart for that which is eternal; (2) That "vanity and lies," or pride, should be removed in order that he should sincerely learn and worship in complete dependence on God for his needs. He

prays for balance and contentment in his life with man and God (Matt. 6:11).

Proverbs 30:10: Slander and wrong done in life, whether by master or servant, will be rewarded accordingly (Col. 3:25). God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11; Acts 10:34). We do not have the approval of God to do wrong, even to the most ungodly folks we meet in life.

Evil Fours

Proverbs 30:11-15a: Honoring our father and mother is the first commandment with promise (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Eph. 6:1-4). Four “wicked generations,” hateful groups, or classes of people in the world cannot correctly suppose themselves to be pure while they refuse to observe the commands of God. There are four classes of sinners or evil ones mentioned: (1) There are the self-righteous, proud, and arrogant hypocrites toward their parents; (2) The self-righteous who are willing to oppress the indigent of the world; (3) Those full of pride and of a vain heart; and (4) The “two daughters” who act like blood-sucking leeches in their greedy ways, as never-satisfied “vampires.”

Proverbs 30:15b-16: There are four things that are insatiable, or never satisfied, and it is further learned that they will always be with us in the world: (1) The grave (Heb. 9:27); (2) The barren womb crying out to produce seed; (3) The thirst of the earth for water; and (4) Fire that will not be satisfied, but keeps on burning.

Proverbs 30:17: Those who think they can mock God by being rude to parents and listening to none of their counsel shall not be respected themselves when they die (Gal. 6:7-10).

Too Wonderful To Comprehend

Proverbs 30:18-19: Another quartet of happenings in the world “too wonderful for me,” or which I cannot

follow in wisdom, or are not understood fully by man are: (1) The actions of an eagle in flight; (2) The heat-seeking serpent coming to a rock; (3) The control of a tossing ship on the ocean (cf. Jas. 3:4); and (4) The attraction and love a man has for a maiden.

Two Types Of Women

Proverbs 30:20: There is nothing better than a godly woman, and nothing worse than an ungodly woman in her sinful enjoyment. The ungodly woman's ways need to be understood as being without upright moral thinking, and ready to snare the unsuspecting man. She thinks no more of committing adultery than sitting down to eat, and wiping away the evidence of her shame as if innocent and unimportant. God assures that He thinks differently (Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:2).

It Will Not Work

Proverbs 30:21-23: Four things intolerable or never satisfied are given which disturb peace and harmony in the world: (1) A servant who is given power too quickly, and is unable to handle the elevated position; (2) A fool who is suddenly made rich; (3) An odious or hated woman who snares a man into marriage; and (4) A maidservant who steals her owner's place and inheritance.

Lessons From The Insignificant

Proverbs 30:24-28: We should never despise or overlook the "little things" of the earth that teach us great lessons in shrewdness and wisdom! (1) "The ants" are personified to show a person who is small in power, but successful because of being busy and industrious in his affairs (Prov. 6:6); (2) "The conies" (mountain mice) are like folks who know their limitations, and take refuge in the rocks for protection; (3) "The locusts" in their wisdom

band together for strength; (4) “The spider” can teach us lessons in persistence, finding its presence in the lowly place as well as even in king’s palaces!

Lessons From The Animals

Proverbs 30:29-31: For suggestions of additional wisdom, there are suggested four things that are graceful, stately, and powerful in life: (1) The lion, because of his might and bravery, is considered the king of the forest; (2) The greyhound is known for quickness and speed; (3) A male goat refuses to give up in a fight; and (4) A king learns to rule in wise ascendancy over others lest anarchy arises.

Proverbs 30:32: If we find ourselves in foolish actions of pride, or evil and haughty conduct, we are to turn away wrath and a contentious spirit by being cautious and careful of our speech (Psm. 49:10; Prov. 12:1; Prov. 18:6-7)!

Learning Patience From Proverbs

Proverbs 30:33: Industry with patience will not be resisted or suppressed because, as in the churning of milk until it becomes butter, it is a necessity for success in life. Picking at an already sore nose will bring blood, just as picking at a problem will cause strife. So also will the “forcing of our wrath [bring] forth strife.” The ambitious man will be bringing about his own injury.

Conclusion

Let each of us profit from the writing of Proverbs 30, The Sayings of Agur, in all of our dealings with God and our fellowman. Let us “keep our heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23), and let us remember that our words come forth from our heart or thinking (Prov. 23:7). Let us pay the proper respect to our fellowman and especially to our God and His Word.



About The Author

Married to Maggie (Witty), 3 children. Graduate; Freed Hardeman College. Authors articles in numerous brotherhood periodicals. Speaks on several lectureships each year. Taught 20 years in preacher school work in OK, TN. Presently in full-time Gospel meeting work. Located in Collierville, TN.

CHAPTER 31

Reward vs. Punishment In Proverbs

Michael Hatcher

Introduction

WHEN GOD CREATED ALL THINGS, He established a principle for all time. In the biological realm, it is the Law of Biogenesis (life beginnings), and is seen in the statements in Genesis 1 that everything would produce “after their kind.” When two animals cohabit, their offspring will be what they are. For example, two monkeys will not produce a giraffe or a human child; they will produce another monkey. We observe the same principle regarding the vegetable kingdom—a watermelon seed will not produce corn or peaches or anything other than a watermelon.

The Biblical writers, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, often used this principle in their writings. Paul states the principle in different words when he writes:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7-8).

He uses this principle in the form of sowing and reaping. If a person sows a particular seed, he will reap the type of seed which he sowed. However, Paul applies this to the

way in which a man lives. When a man lives according to God's Word, then that man will receive the blessings of God. If a man lives contrary to the Scriptures, then he will reap corruption.

The wise man Solomon uses this same principle as he writes this marvelous book of wise sayings. He writes, "The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors" (Prov. 26:10). Solomon teaches us that God Who created all things will render to each person according as their work shall be. He will reward the fool, and He will reward the transgressor. Earlier he had stated the same principle from the opposite standpoint: "The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward" (Prov. 11:18). In these two passages, Solomon sets forth the subject for this lesson: the reward of those who are righteous and the punishment of the wicked.

Proverbs is one of the poetical books of the Bible. As such, it is written in the poetical style of the Orientals. The Bible poetry is not the rhythm and meter of our style; instead it is parallelism (sometimes called thought-rhyme).¹ There are two basic types of parallelism which impact our study in particular: synonymous and antithetic. In synonymous parallelism two lines will say the same thing in different words. In antithetic parallelism the two lines give the opposite thoughts or contrast each other. As Solomon discusses this great theme of reward and punishment, he often uses these two types of parallelism; he uses antithetic more than synonymous. He will present one side of the situation and then approach the same idea from the opposite standpoint. A good illustration is found in Proverbs 2:21-22: "For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it." "Dwell in the land" and "cut off from

the earth” are saying the same thing, just from an opposite standpoint. Thus as one looks at reward versus punishment in Proverbs, he can normally see that, whatever blessings the righteous will receive, the wicked will not receive them.

One last introductory item is that, when one considers both reward and punishment, there are two different aspects of each. There are always going to be earthly or temporal rewards or punishment along with eternal ones.

Two Classes

There have always been two classes of people, and only two classes. From the beginning we see both classes, when Adam and Eve first lived according to God’s commands and then turned from doing God’s commands to do Satan’s bidding. Prior to their sin, they had sweet fellowship with God, but, when they sinned, that fellowship was broken, and they were separated from Him. We see these two classes with Cain and Abel. Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice to God while Cain did not. God told Cain, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door” (Gen. 4:7). Instead of doing well, Cain proceeded to sin and murder his brother Abel.

While it would be easy to follow the history of time and see the two classes of people, Jesus sums up the situation when He says, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30). Thus, those two classes of people are those who are with Christ/God, and those who are against Christ/God. As one studies God’s Word, he notices that those two classes of people are described by many different terms. Some of those terms which would describe those on God’s side would be good, righteous, just, wise, upright, holy,

faithful, those who trust in the Lord, and those who fear God. Some of the terms which describe those who are not on God's side would be wicked, evil, unrighteous, unjust, sinners, transgressors, fools, froward, backsliders, workers of iniquity, proud in heart, scorers, and those who sow iniquity.² Sometimes, instead of describing the person, the actions of the individual are described. Thus, instead of saying that a person is wicked (or another term), it states the action which the person has taken that places him in this category.

Punishment Of The Wicked

From the first, God established that those who do not live according to His Word will be punished: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). When Adam and Eve sinned by eating of that tree, they did suffer the punishment of death. They died spiritually in that they were separated from God (death is simply a separation—Jas. 2:26). Also, they no longer had access to the tree of life, so they died physically. Cain learned that, when one entered into sin, punishment resulted. God did not have respect for (He turned away from) Cain's offering, and, when he murdered his brother Abel, God punished him:

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the LORD

said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden (Gen. 4:11-16).

The entire history of man proclaims that, when man sins, punishment results. (This is that principle of sowing and reaping.) Solomon knew well this basic principle of life established by God from the beginning. Thus, as he gives the sage advice throughout Proverbs, he shows that, when men go astray, they will be punished. Generally, Solomon does not go into specifics of the punishment but often states simply that punishment will come. For example, he states that the wicked shall not be unpunished (Prov. 11:21). He also uses this phrase (“not be unpunished”) for those who are proud in heart (Prov. 16:5), the one who is glad at calamities (Prov. 17:5), and a false witness (Prov. 19:5; Prov. 19:9). While he does not go into detail about the punishment, we do begin learning how we are to live so that we will not be punished, and we know that punishment of some type will come.

Solomon has a great deal to say about the wicked. The “wicked” is one who is guilty of sin whether it be against God or man. Let us notice some other statements given by Solomon about the wicked. He informs us that they shall be cut off from the earth (Prov. 2:22), or that they shall not inhabit the earth (Prov. 10:30). These are statements dealing with a physical punishment which comes as a result of living a wicked life; specifically, physical death will come upon them. He says that they will be cursed by Jehovah (Prov. 3:33). Swanson says that “curse” is “the content of what is spoken to injure another.”³ While what God says is not stated, it is apparent that one does not want God to speak to his injury, whether it be regarding the physical world or the world to come. Solomon

also says that the wicked will have calamity come upon him suddenly and that he will be broken without remedy or without any possibility of putting it back together (Prov. 6:15). “Calamity” is defined as distress, burden, or disaster.

Proverbs 10 sets forth many punishments for the wicked. Beginning with Proverbs 10:2, there are “a series of proverbs which place possessions and goods under a moral-religious point of view.”⁴ He tells us that the treasures of the wicked person will profit nothing (Prov. 10:2) and that God will cast away his substance (Prov. 10:3). Delitzsch says of this last phrase:

The desire of the wicked He does not suffer to be accomplished; it may appear for a long time as if that which was aimed at was realized, but in the end God pushes it back, so that it remains at a distance, because contrary to Him.⁵

He then states that “violence covereth the mouth of the wicked” (Prov. 10:6). Matthew Henry suggests what this means:

Their mouths shall be stopped with shame for the violence which they have done; they shall not have a word to say in excuse for themselves (Job 5:16); their breath shall be stopped with the violence that shall be done to them, when their violent dealings shall return on their heads, shall be returned to their teeth.⁶

Solomon then states that “the name of the wicked shall rot” (Prov. 10:7). Their name will become loathsome to all because of the wickedness they did. As one thinks of some of the notorious names of the past (Judas, Benedict Arnold, Hitler, etc.), we understand exactly what he is saying. Solomon goes on to say that “the fruit of the wicked [tendeth] to sin” (Prov. 10:16). His wickedness ruins his life and produces sin with its wages of death (Rom. 6:23; Jas. 1:15).

Next, Solomon says that the fear of the wicked will come upon him (Prov. 10:24). Clarke writes, “The wicked is full of fears and alarms; and all that he has dreaded and more than he has dreaded, shall come upon him.”⁷ A good example of this is someone who is going to commit a crime always being fearful of getting caught. Yet this verse shows that there is not only that fear which will come upon him, but even worse ones will occur.

The next verse says that the wicked will be like a whirlwind that passes; they will be no more (Prov. 10:25). This can either mean that, as a tornado sweeps away everything in its path, the wicked will likewise be swept away,⁸ or it can mean that, as a tornado is here but then dissipates and is gone, so will the wicked soon cease to exist and all will be quiet.⁹ This idea is also found in Proverbs 12:7 when it says that they “are not.”

Solomon then says that the wicked man’s years shall be shortened (Prov. 10:27). Their wicked lifestyle is not conducive to a long life; thus, their lifespan shall be shortened. This idea is repeated in the next verse when it states that the expectation of the wicked shall perish (Prov. 10:28). Let us briefly mention the other punishments mentioned by Solomon in Proverbs dealing with the wicked. He says that their expectation is wrath (Prov. 11:23); not only will they be overthrown (Prov. 12:7), but their house will also be overthrown (Prov. 14:11); and God is the One Who will do it (Prov. 21:12). He says that their lamp will be put out (Prov. 13:9), and they will be driven away (Prov. 14:32). He also tells them that the revenues they receive will be trouble (Prov. 15:6). Solomon teaches that God made all things and that He made “the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov. 16:4). God did not make a man wicked, but, when a man according to his own free moral choices decides to live wickedly, then God will punish him eternally.

Solomon also says that, when the wicked come, contempt also comes (Prov. 18:3) and that the wicked will fall into mischief (Prov. 24:16). Later, we are told that the righteous will see the wicked fall (Prov. 29:16). Then Solomon informs us that the wicked man's lamp will be put out (Prov. 13:9) and that his candle will be put out (Prov. 24:20). All of these punishments are going to come upon those whom Solomon says are "wicked."

Solomon uses many other terms (other than "wicked") to describe those to whom punishment will come. Some of these are dealing with specific sins while others are general terms which are all-encompassing. There are several terms, closely associated with "wicked," which he uses. He says of the workers of iniquity that destruction will come upon them (Prov. 10:29). There are two things stated of those who sow iniquity in Proverbs 22:8. They will reap vanity, and they shall fail (the footnote makes this read that they will be consumed). These who are wicked are also called evil. Solomon says that the one who pursues evil does so to his own death (Prov. 11:19), and later he says they have no reward (Prov. 24:20). Then he says of the evil man who seeks rebellion that a cruel messenger will be sent against him (Prov. 17:11). Then the evil man's transgression will be a snare (Prov. 29:6). Then Solomon says that the way of the transgressor is hard (Prov. 13:15) and that evil pursues his way (Prov. 13:21). Then the man who is perverse is said to fall at once (Prov. 28:18). Also closely associated with the perverse man is the man who rewards evil for good; "evil shall not depart from his house" (Prov. 17:13), or God will continue to bring trouble, adversity, distress, or calamity upon not only him but also his posterity.

Solomon says that fools will promote shame (Prov. 3:35) and that stripes are prepared for their back (Prov. 19:29). No wonder he says that "the foolishness of fools is

folly” (Prov. 14:24). He also states that those who wander out of the way of understanding (another way of saying a fool) shall remain in the congregation of the dead (Prov. 21:16).

That man who is proud in heart is an abomination to God (Prov. 16:5), while “judgments are prepared for scorers” (Prov. 19:29). Then reproach comes upon ignominy (Prov. 18:3). Strong defines “ignominy” as “shame, disgrace, dishonour, ignominy,”¹⁰ while Swanson says, “shame, disgrace, i.e., a state of dishonor and ignominy (infamy) and so have low status and public disgrace, with associated feelings of shame.”¹¹ Those who speak lies will not escape (Prov. 19:5) and will perish (Prov. 19:9).

The purveyors of change in the Lord’s church today should take heed because calamity and ruin will come upon those who are given to change (Prov. 24:22). In some very practical observations, Solomon says that the one who digs a pit will fall into the pit (Prov. 26:27; Prov. 28:10) and the one who rolls a stone will have it return upon him (Prov. 26:27). Then the one who tries to hurry to be rich will not be innocent (Prov. 28:20) or unpunished (ASV). This reminds us of all the teachings in the New Testament concerning those who would be rich and who love money. Another passage quoted in the New Testament says that, when you return good to an enemy, you will heap coals of fire upon his head (Prov. 25:22).

As we conclude this section of punishment, we learn that punishment will come upon those who do not live as God has set forth within His Word. That punishment might take different forms. It might be that he is punished in this world, having evil return upon him in various ways. It will be that eternal punishment will come upon that man. He will eventually be eternally cut off from God and spend an eternal punishment in hellfire with the devil and his angels.

Reward For The Righteous

The principle of sowing and reaping not only is applicable to punishment for the wicked but also applies to rewards for the righteous. At the same time Cain sinned in the offering he made, God not only set forth punishment, but He also mentioned one's reward when acting properly: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:7). When one does well (i.e., doing what God requires), then he will be accepted by God—he will receive a reward. Solomon knew the need man has for both aspects of this equation. If there is only punishment, then there is no real motivation to live for God. Man also needs reward. Thus, throughout this book, Solomon (by inspiration of God) sets before man a reward for the righteous.

The most common term Solomon uses about those who will receive a reward is "righteous" (or "righteousness"). The apostle of love, John, wrote, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7). "Righteousness" is defined by the Psalmist as the commands of God: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness" (Psm. 119:172). Paul reveals that the Gospel reveals the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16-17). Thus, when one does the commands of God, or obeys the Gospel of Christ, then he is righteous and will receive the reward.

Solomon says that righteousness will deliver us from death (Prov. 10:2), and, in its pathway, there is no death (Prov. 12:28). He approaches this from the opposite side by saying that righteousness tends to life (Prov. 10:16; Prov. 11:19). Those who are doing the commands of God (obeying the Gospel of Christ) are living such a lifestyle that is conducive to long life. However, there is certainly a

spiritual application to these as well as the physical. Based on this spiritual application, Solomon says, “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death” (Prov. 14:32). He has hope in his death because he has lived in such a way as to obtain that eternal reward of heaven. Instead of being eternally separated from God (spiritual death) and being punished, he will live with God in heaven, being eternally blessed.

As with punishment, Proverbs 10 deals a great deal with reward in contrast to punishment. With many of these, he uses the word “righteous”; however, we will add other terms here also as we go through this chapter. Solomon says that he will not suffer the soul of the righteous to suffer famish (Prov. 10:3). God feeds his soul spiritually with His Word, but He will also provide physical food for him. Then the just are blessed (Prov. 10:6); their memory (Prov. 10:7) and their habitation are blessed (Prov. 3:33). Later he says that the faithful man will abound with blessings (Prov. 28:20). To be “blessed” by God is to be in a right relationship with God and thus receive benefits which He gives to His children. We noted that it tends to life (Prov. 10:16), certainly an abundant life in the here and now and eternal life with God.

Then the blessings of God make one rich (Prov. 10:22), plus, in the righteous man’s house, there is much treasure (Prov. 15:6). The one who has God’s blessings in his life is one who has the true riches, even though he might not have a lot of money to his name. He is one who has peace and harmony in his life, for he is in the right relationship with God, and thus he can rejoice. He is truly a blessed man who has the true riches. Thus, God adds no sorrow to his life (Prov. 10:22); he can “rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4).

Solomon adds that the desires of the righteous would be granted (Prov. 10:24). The righteous man has the avenue

of prayer available to him, upon which he can ask what he wills, and it will be granted to him (Jas. 5:16; 1 John 3:22). The righteous are an everlasting foundation (Prov. 10:25). They are built upon the Rock of Ages (Matt. 7:24-25). Since he has built his life on that good foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), he shall never be removed (Prov. 10:30). It is no wonder that Solomon will say that the Lord's way is strength to the upright (Prov. 10:29). Then those who fear the Lord will have their days prolonged (Prov. 10:27). When one considers just these things, we understand why Solomon says that the hope of the righteous is gladness (Prov. 10:28).

As we return to the rewards for those whom Solomon calls "righteous," we notice that his seed will be delivered (Prov. 11:21). Henry states, "Sometimes 'the seed of the righteous,' though they are not themselves righteous, are delivered for the sake of their godly ancestors, as Israel often, and the seed of David."¹² Thus, the righteous man's house shall stand (Prov. 12:7). As we noticed previously, the righteous man can rejoice (Prov. 13:9), and later he adds "sing and rejoice" (Prov. 29:6). James writes, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (Jas. 5:13).

We have considered the principle of sowing and reaping. Solomon uses this when he says that the righteous will be repaid with good (Prov. 13:21) and that followers of mercy and righteousness will find life, righteousness, and honor (Prov. 21:21). Then Solomon says that the righteous will see the fall of the wicked (Prov. 29:16). What great incentive to live according to (or do) the commands of God!

Closely associated with "righteous" is "upright." The righteous is one who is doing the commands of God, while the upright is one who is right or correct in what he is doing. We will be right if we are doing God's commands.

The man who walks uprightly will be saved (Prov. 28:18). “Saved” is applied to being saved from our past sins or being saved in heaven. Here, probably, being saved in heaven is meant. What a great reward to be able to spend eternity with God in heaven, but it is only for those who walk uprightly. However, that is not the only reward for the upright. He shall dwell in the land (Prov. 2:21). He will be given strength (Prov. 10:29), and his tabernacle (which is a nomad’s tent, representing one’s home) will flourish (Prov. 14:11), and he will have good things in his possession (Prov. 28:10).

Solomon also speaks of those who are wise. While the fool says there is no God (Psm. 14:1), the wise man will live according to God’s Word. Thus, Solomon says that the wise will inherit glory (Prov. 3:35) and that his way of life (i.e., the way of holiness or the way of God) is above so that he may depart from hell beneath (Prov. 15:24). The wise man’s law is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death (Prov. 13:14). Then the crown of the wise man is his riches (Prov. 14:24), and the one who handles a matter wisely will find good (Prov. 16:20). Closely related to “wise” is the one with good understanding (Prov. 13:15) who will receive favour. Among the definitions given by Swanson for “favour” is:

[A]cts which display one’s fondness or compassion for another... grace, kindness, kindheartedness, compassion, i.e., acts of kindness displaying one’s pleasure with an object, which benefit the object of pleasure.¹³

Then, when one finds the knowledge of wisdom, he will have a reward, and his expectation will not be cut off (Prov. 24:14). Some translations, instead of having “reward,” have “future.” Their future or reward in the afterlife will not be cut off but will be eternal glory.

Then the just man, even though he falls seven times, will rise up again (Prov. 24:16). All face difficulties at times in their lives, but the just man has a good foundation for his life so that, when the troubles come, he will rise up and overcome them, for he knows God is with him. Thus, the man who is good will be satisfied from within himself (Prov. 14:14). He has that peace, harmony, and joy of the blessed life: thus the one who trusts in God is happy (Prov. 16:20). Swanson says of “happy,” “blessedness, happiness, good fortune, i.e., a state of joyful mind.”¹⁴ It is not surprising then that the one who keeps God’s way preserves his soul (Prov. 16:17) and the one fearing the Lord prolongs his days (Prov. 10:27).

Conclusion

Proverbs is a book instructing man (probably a youth) as to how to live properly. However, why should anyone live according to the principles established in this book of wise sayings? Solomon gives us motivating reasons—reward and punishment. Those who live acceptably to God will be rewarded by Him with eternal life. However, they will also be rewarded in this earthly life. On the other hand, those who fail to live according to God’s revealed Will will suffer eternal punishment in torment, separated from God and all that is good. However, they will be punished in this life also. Let us so live that we may avoid the punishment Solomon presents and enjoy the rewards of God.

Endnotes

1 For a further study on this see Michael Hatcher, “The Blessed Man; Psalm 1,” **Beatitudes**, ed. Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL: Bellview church of Christ, 2002), pp. 30-31.

2 Most of these terms are found in Proverbs.

3 J. Swanson, **Dictionary Of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains**, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), HGK4423.

4 C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, **Commentary On The Old Testament**, Volume 6 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), p. 152.

5 Ibid, p. 153.

6 Matthew Henry, **Matthew Henry's Commentary On The Whole Bible**, electronic ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996).

7 Adam Clarke, **Clarke's Commentary: Proverbs**, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999).

8 Clarke.

9 Henry.

10 James Strong, **The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible**, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996), H7036.

11 Swanson, HGK7830.

12 Henry.

13 Swanson, HGK2834.

14 Ibid, HGK890.



About The Author

Native of Florida. Married to Karen (Savage), 2 children. Graduate: Harding College (B. A.). Local preaching: FL, TX, OK, AR. Editor: *Defender*. Director and Editor: *The Bellview Lectureship*. Gospel meetings and lectureships in several states. Local Preacher: Bellview church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida since 1994.

CHAPTER 32

A Greater Than Solomon Is Here

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Introduction

IT CONTINUES TO BE an annual delight to participate in the great **POWER** Lectureship, as I have done for all the previous ones. Genuine gratitude is expressed to B. J., Wayne, the elders, and the entire membership here at Southaven for the gracious invitation to speak on the current one. This is a timely and much-needed theme.

Solomon is credited with three Old Testament books. The “Wisest of the Ages” shed much practical wisdom in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

More than once Jesus referred to Solomon in His teaching. He does so upon the Galilean Mountain where we read:

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these (Matt. 6:28-29).

A later allusion reads:

The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon;

and behold, a greater than Solomon is here
(Matt. 12:42).

As One of the Godhead Three, Jesus, the Eternal Word, had given Solomon his wisdom, clothed him with honors and earthly glory, and supplied him with fabulous riches almost beyond human computation. What Solomon had, physically and mentally, he owed to a gracious Godhead. David, his father, had been blessed lavishly and in turn passed much of it at his death to the new heir of the throne. There was no justification for Solomon's feeling any degree of pride.

The name of Solomon is a readily recognized synonym for wisdom, wealth, and earthly glory surrounding his court. The first few chapters of 1 Kings depict the rise and fall of Israel's third monarch. His sun rose in splendor and set amidst his plunge into heathen darkness and pagan degeneracy. "How the mighty are fallen" serves as an accurate title of 1 Kings 11—one of the saddest chapters in the whole Bible.

Some Similarities Between Solomon and Jesus Christ

1. Both were descendants, inclusive of Jesus in His humanity, of Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, as any of the Scriptural genealogies will amply establish. Matthew relates the forty-two generations from Abraham down to Christ (Matt. 1:1ff). Luke carries the genealogy all the way back to Adam, the son of God (Luke 3:23-38). Hence, they shared a common family tree.

2. Both were sons of David, with one immediate and the other remote. A familiar designation of Jesus in the New Testament is that He is "the Son of David." This is how the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24ff) addressed Him in Matthew 15:22. This is how blind

Bartimaeus described Him in Mark 10:47. The Pharisees so described Him in Matthew 22:42. Their answer was inconclusive, as it was not nearly as comprehensive as it should have been.

3. Both were kings and Jesus still is, pernicious premillennialism notwithstanding. Solomon's reign lasted for forty years. The reign of King Jesus nears the two-thousand-year mark, or nearly twice what the premillennialists have carved out for Him in their materialistic theory. Jesus became King over His kingdom in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. He has occupied David's throne in heaven since Acts 2.

4. Both were rich but in different ways. Solomon was rich in worldly wealth. It is a bit difficult to gauge accurately just how rich he was. Jesus was rich with spiritual matters. He came as the water of life and the bread of life (John 4; John 6). Minus these man cannot survive spiritually. He was the hidden treasure a man found in a field (Matt. 13:44). He was the pearl of great price that the seeking connoisseur desired so deeply (Matt. 13:45-46). He was the One Who could dispense eternal life. The rich young ruler failed to fathom the treasure laid before him which he rejected for his riches back home. He is God's unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9:15). He and His Father are rich in mercy, kindness, and grace (Eph. 2:4ff).

5. Both were widely recognized for an amazing degree of wisdom. With exceptional ease Solomon solved the problem of the two women claiming motherhood to the same child in 1 Kings 3:16-27. 1 Kings 3:28 states, "And all Israel heard of the judgment which the King had judged; and they feared the king: for they say that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment."

A detailed summation of his amazing wisdom is given in 1 Kings 4:29ff. The chapter ends with these words, "And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon,

from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kings 4:34). Sheba’s Queen traveled a great distance to observe Solomon’s wisdom, only to declare that the half had not been told her (1 Kings 10:7). Jesus was far wiser. Hometown people at Nazareth were at a loss to determine how His wisdom came (Mark 6:2). He answered His enemies with a wisdom that baffled them beyond any comeback (Matt. 22; Mark 12; Luke 20).

6. Both built temples. Solomon built his on Mount Moriah in the city of Jerusalem. It did not have eternity stamped upon it. It stood for more than four centuries and then fell to the Chaldean conquerors in 586 B.C. It is nothing but visionary foolishness to contend that another temple will replace the Dome of the Rock on Moriah and will become His house in the so-called millennial era. One thing we can credit the premillennial people with having is a fertile imagination which stays in literary high gear all the time.

Solomon’s temple was completed and dedicated in 1 Kings 7-8. But Jesus built one far greater. Zechariah predicted that the Messianic branch would build the temple of the Lord and that He would be both Priest and King on His throne (Zech. 6:12-13). Isaiah said that the government would be upon His shoulders (Isa. 9:6-7). In the colorful regions of Caesarea Philippi, He made promise that He would build His church and Hadean gates of opposition would be impotent in hindering this heavenly plan (Matt. 16:18). They did not, and He established it in perfection on Pentecost in Acts 2. Daniel predicted that it would be an everlasting kingdom (Dan. 2:44). The writer of Hebrews 12:28-29 called it a kingdom which cannot be moved. It will last till His second coming, at which time He will turn it over to the Father, as per 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. Solomon built a physical edifice; Christ built a spiritual edifice. The latter has stood the test of time in marvelous duration.

7. Both occupied David's throne. For Solomon it was situated in Jerusalem. We read, "Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly" (1 Kings 2:12). A passage in 1 Chronicles 29:23 provides another insight which reads, "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him." Hence, David's throne was the Lord's throne.

Jesus has been on David's throne for nearly two millennia now, though pernicious premillennialism has denied his occupancy of such for as much as one second! Their far-fetched claim is that the Messiah will occupy it in old Jerusalem for one thousand years subsequent to His second advent. Peter, in Acts 2, has Him on that very throne on Pentecost. God raised Him up to sit on that throne in heaven (Acts 2:30). The inimitable N. B. Hardeman used to say that, if Jesus did not do what God raised Him up to do, then for all practical purposes the resurrection could have been deferred to this good moment of time or even way out there in the future. If Jesus is not on David's throne in heaven, then He is not now a King. If He is not now a King, He, likewise, is not now a Priest, and He has not purged our sins. If our sins have not been purged, we are yet in all of them.

But let us approach it from a slightly different angle. If He is not now on David's throne, He has no Kingdom. If He has no Kingdom, then there is no new birth. If there is no Kingdom, then there is nothing for the new-birth recipient to enter. If there is no new birth, there is no salvation, period, for either Jew or Gentile. James, the Lord's brother, proved that in Acts 15:13ff. Yet a lady told me years ago that I was too hard on premillennialism, for "it is a harmless, innocent doctrine." Neither of her adjectives fits any of the deadly premillennial persuasion, period!

8. Both had objections to their kingship. In David's sunset days Adonijah sought to usurp the throne, even though David had promised the throne to Bathsheba's son—not Haggith's son. Prompt action on the part of Bathsheba and Nathan foiled the usurper's plan. Even after Solomon became king, he had Adonijah put to death, evidently considering him a threat to the security of his throne.

Both the Christ and His Kingdom were opposed by Satan, Rome, and the Jewish hierarchy. In Pilate's court Jewish rulers cried out vehemently, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). Jews first and Rome later fought the King and His Kingdom from Acts 4 through Revelation.

9. Both Solomon and Christ were beloved. It is affirmed in 2 Samuel 12:24 that the Lord loved Solomon when he was a babe and a boy. The noble Nathan called Solomon by the name of Jedidiah, which means "beloved of Jehovah." David and Bathsheba loved Solomon devotedly. After he became king, he was loved by his subjects until he became despotic toward them and far too demanding of them. In later life he failed to live up to what is implied in the name Jedidiah. This was a good name, but he failed to add luster to it; in fact, he blemished it.

Jesus was loved by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Second Person had been the darling object of the Father's affection from all eternity. Subsequent to His immersion by the hands of John, the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). While Jesus was transfigured on the high mountain, the Father said to "The Inner Three," "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). Peter's allusion to this in 2 Peter 1:16-18 contains a Greek construction meaning an eternal pleasure that the First Person had in the Second Person. Mohammed never has Allah to say such about Christ, which is one of the major

reasons why Allah is not the Jehovah of our beloved Bible. B. J. Clarke proved that conclusively in the masterful lecture he gave at Spring, Texas, earlier this year and which adorns their great lectureship volume dealing with Islam, one of the most influential books produced in our time. At this writing I have just finished reading it as of today, April 15, 2003.

Major Differences Between Solomon and Jesus Christ

In this segment I shall produce a definitive case for Christ as being greater, **far** greater, than Solomon. Jesus was not arrogant in this sweeping affirmation when He declared Himself to be a greater than Solomon; He simply stated the matter factually and truthfully. To have assessed Solomon as being greater would have been a betrayal of truth. To have placed Solomon and Himself as equal would have been another betrayal of truth. In doing such, He would have committed the same massive mistake Peter did in seeking to level Jesus with Moses and Elijah in Matthew 17:1ff.

1. Solomon was a creature of time. His was not an advent to our world. He had no prior existence in the eternal past. He did not exist until there was a union between David and Bathsheba, his parents. In bright and bold contrast, the Christ has always existed as the Eternal Word Who became God's only begotten Son in the unique unfolding of the rich scheme of redemption. I do not subscribe to the eternal **Sonship** of Christ but to His eternal existence as the Word (John 1:1-3; John 1:14). That Word **became** flesh and dwelt among us. He preceded Abraham (John 8:58). Note the verb usage relative to Abraham and then to Christ in this pithy "I Am" declaration. He preceded John the Baptist as the great Harbinger himself stated (John 1:15; John 1:30). Yet,

humanly speaking, Jesus was six months younger than John, as per Luke 1. Micah 5:2 establishes His eternality beyond successful argument to the contrary. So does Hebrews 13:8. He is as eternal as is the First Person and as is the Third Person (Psm. 90:1-2; Heb. 9:14). Again, one will look in vain in the Quran or the sayings of Mohammed for this eternal portrait of the Second Person. Mohammed slandered and blasphemed Christ throughout his humanly derived and very, Very, VERY boring volume. It is amazingly amazing that anybody would want to consume the necessary time to memorize the Quran. As a rule I do not use notes in my sermons. Yet in a recent series of Sunday night lessons on Mohammed and Islam, I told my audience I would be **reading** from the Quran—not quoting various selections by memory. It is not worthy of memorization time, at least it is not to me! But with the Bible it is different; I spend time every day in memorizing Scriptures. I find the process to be precious.

2. Solomon was born normally just as you and I have been—by a union of a man and a woman with God putting a soul therein. He was the son of David and Bathsheba, as we observe in 2 Samuel 12. He therefore had a father on earth; he had a mother on earth. In bold and bright contrast, Jesus was virgin-conceived and virgin-born. He had a mother here on earth but no father in a biological sense. He had a Father in heaven but no mother up there. This is uniqueness in a delightful dimension! Genesis 3:15 said He would be the “seed of woman.” Isaiah 7:14 is the clearest predictive prophecy we have in the Old Testament relative to the virgin birth. Jeremiah 31:22 portrays a woman who would compass or encompass a man or a man-child. In my judgment, this refers to what would happen later to Mary and Jesus. She, unaided by any man, would encompass a man-child—the Christ. Matthew and Luke confirm the precise and precious fulfillment of these Old Testament predictive prophecies.

3. Solomon was solely human—one hundred percent human. He was not God and man. He was not Immanuel. He was not “God with us” the sixty years or so that he spent on earth as David’s son and Israel’s king. He is never styled the only begotten Son of God as Jesus is (John 1:14; John 1:18; John 3:16; John 3:18; 1 John 4:9). But Jesus was/is different. He was one hundred percent human or just as human as was mother Mary. He was one hundred percent Divine—as Divine as was His Father in heaven. He is called Immanuel both by Isaiah and Matthew respectively (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:22-23). Mark called Him the Son of God in the opening declaration of his Gospel record (Mark 1:1). So did Nathanael (John 1:49). Peter did more of the same (Matt. 16:16). John’s purpose in writing his Gospel record was to convince his readers that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

4. Solomon built a temporary temple. It lasted for a little over four centuries. The Chaldeans destroyed it in 586 B.C. Jesus built an eternal temple, kingdom or church. It has already lasted almost five times as long as Solomon’s temple did. It will be here when He returns; He will then turn it over to God the Father, as per 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, that God may be all in all.

5. Solomon was led astray in later life. He became a patron and practitioner of the very idolatry that his foreign wives brought into his kingdom. They did not leave their gods and goddesses at either the borders of Israel or the city limits of Jerusalem. They brought them into the very city where Jehovah’s worship was centralized, into the very area where Solomon, in earlier years, had built the fabulous temple. Jesus never had an ounce of respect or a degree of support for any idol. As part of the Godhead Three, stiff legislation was given under the Law of Moses against idols, as evidenced in both Exodus 20 and

Deuteronomy 5. Satan was foiled in his sly attempts to obtain worship from the tried and tested Saviour. In utter disgust Jesus told him to depart (Matt. 4:10).

6. Solomon was a king but never styled King of kings and Lord of lords. In the militant book of Revelation, Jesus is called, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16). Jesus towered over Solomon much like the mighty Alps do the valleys beneath them. Solomon had authority over one nation—not the whole world of his day; Jesus, in bright and bold contrast, exercises authority both in heaven and throughout all earth (Matt. 28:18).

7. Solomon did not always do the will of God Almighty. He was submissive in earlier life but lost his spirit of obedience in later life. God reproved him for this disobedience, but the reproof fell on deaf ears. He persisted in his idolatrous inclinations, as per 1 Kings 11. Pleasing his harem of wives became much more important than pleasing the God Who had made him and placed him on David’s throne. Jesus came to earth to do God’s will. Hebrews 10:5-9 makes that crystal clear. His meat was to do God’s will and to finish the work Heaven had given Him to accomplish (John 4:34). He stated, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). He always did what pleased the Father (John 8:29). Note these additional statements made either by Him or about Him:

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do (John 17:4).

O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matt. 26:39).

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me (Rom. 15:3).

Jesus **never** swayed from His relentless resoluteness to do God's will regardless of what it cost Him. There would have been no Calvary in Solomon's life even if he had remained faithful, for he was not **Heaven's** choice to redeem the world. There was Calvary in Jesus' future all the thirty-three years He tabernacled here on earth, and yet He stayed loyal to the Lord's will. Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes 12:13 but failed to live by it the latter part of his life. Jesus feared God and kept His commandments. In fact He did this with precious and precise perfection.

8. Solomon lived selfishly in His last days. Jesus was the most selfless individual Who ever walked God's green footstool. This is another important area where Jesus was far greater than Solomon.

As per 1 Kings 11, the sunset days of Solomon were spent in infamy and shame. In fact, he undid much of the good he had accomplished in earlier life. How sad to note currently that some of our greatest preachers and writers have undone much of the good they did in earlier life by becoming immoral, dishonest, unfaithful, and even false teachers. The last days of Christ on earth were His finest, as He atoned for man's sins, was raised from the borrowed tomb, and gave the Great Commission prior to His return to the Palace of the Universe on holy high. There is no comparison, only contrasts, between Solomon in 1 Kings 11 and the closing chapters of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John touching the Christ. When Inspiration's Hall of Faith and Fame was being composed (Heb. 11), neither Saul's nor Solomon's name appears. The name of Israel's second king was etched therein but not the first and third monarchs. Jesus was the eloquent epitome of unchanging trust and persistent obedience to God the Father. Solomon fell far below such an ideal.

9. Solomon died and was not raised again in three days. His body returned to dust, as he himself wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:7. His spirit has been in the Hadean

realm now for nearly three thousand years. Jesus died, but death was impotent in holding Him captive. He came forth triumphant over the tomb early that Sunday morning (Mark 16:9). Jesus died for our sins. Solomon did not. He could not atone for his own sins of which there were many. Even if Solomon had been resurrected, it would not have been for anyone's justification (Rom. 4:25).

10. Solomon's yoke over the people was heavy to bear, as we see in what they said to Solomon's son and successor in 1 Kings 12. Yet, in His own Words, Jesus stressed:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11:29-30).

Jesus was/is Saviour of the world. His very name signifies Saviour (Matt. 1:21). He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Solomon was not the Saviour of the world, his own nation, or his own family. In fact, he was an extremely poor example before the world of nations, his own subjects, and his own family during his closing days on earth. Doubtlessly, there will be people in hell because of Solomon's defection in his sunset years, as he encouraged idolatry and made it flourish near his administration's conclusion. He surely did little or nothing to lift his heathen, paganistic wives out of lethal idolatry into the worship and service to God. From Revelation 21:8 and Revelation 22:15 we know the ultimate destiny of all who die as idolaters. I am made to wonder if **any** of Solomon's foreign wives died in a saved relationship with God. How utterly sad this is, for he could have made a difference in their lives and destinies!

11. Solomon had one thousand wives, including princesses and concubines. Nehemiah 13:26 spells out what these outlandish or foreign women did to the once

pious and powerful Solomon. In bold and bright contrast, Jesus has **one** bride. This is all He has ever had, all He now has, and all He ever will have. Solomon was a patron of polygamy; Jesus was/is a model for monogamy. This point alone would spell out what is wrong with denominationalism in contending that Jesus has a great plurality of brides! What blasphemy toward Him!

12. Solomon was never a worthy object of worship. No mere man ever is, whether a past or present Pope, a founder of a new religion, a strong charismatic leader, Mary of the first century, or Mary Baker Eddy of more recent times. Jesus, as God, was/is worthy of worship. God commanded angels of heaven to worship Him (Heb. 1:6). This refutes Jehovah's Witness doctrine that makes Him a creature—not the Creator. No creature is ever deemed worthy of worship. It would have been wrong for Jesus to have worshipped Satan in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Satan is a created being—not a member of the Godhead or Godhood. The nameless woman in Matthew 15:25 worshiped Him as she made a plea for her daughter. Devout women worshiped Him (Matt. 28:9). Revelation 5 presents a portrait of His being worthy of worship by the denizens of heaven, just as the Father was deemed worthy of worship in Revelation 4.

How Could Solomon Have Been So Wise And Lived So Foolishly?

This question is worthy of our serious consideration. Perhaps it has occurred to you as you have read what he wrote in the poetic section of the Old Testament and then pondered what is said of him in 1 Kings 11.

He failed to honor the good counsel given by his father David on his deathbed and right before Solomon became king. David charged the youthful Solomon to keep the charge of the Lord and “to walk in his ways, to keep his

statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies” (1 Kings 2:3). He stayed faithful toward it in earlier life but became faithless toward it in later life.

Perhaps he was painting his own portrait when he wrote, “Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no longer be admonished” (Eccl. 4:13). He reached the place where he paid no attention to God above or any counselor. The older men who gave good counsel to Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12 could have aided him no doubt.

He failed to honor what he wrote in Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

He failed to do what he counseled others to do—fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). Was he not writing to himself in this momentous matter? He surely should have been!

Perhaps the writer of 1 Kings 11 and Nehemiah hit the real reason on dead center—all the pagan women he married and later becoming wedded to their gods and goddesses. He actively supported the basest forms of absurd idolatry. Nehemiah wrote:

Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless even he did outlandish (foreign—ASV) women cause to sin (Neh. 13:26).

They exerted far greater influence over him than he did over them. I find this to be amazingly amazing!

Solomon lived far below his wisdom and his privileges. He wrote well, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, but failed to live in harmony with what he wrote!

Conclusion

There are major reasons why Jesus was/is greater than Solomon. Countless millions have died for Christ. How many of these would have died for Solomon and especially when he was filling Jerusalem with idols, honoring his wives, and dishonoring his Heavenly Father?



About The Author

Native of Tennessee. Married to Irene (Crump), 2 children, 4 grandchildren. Graduate: Freed Hardeman University; David Lipscomb University; George Peabody College for Teachers. Gospel meetings and lectureships in various states. Author of 30 books, 25-30 tracts, contributor to over 150 other books. Staff writer for a number of our religious publications. Authored scripts and extended outlines for V. E. Howard and The International Gospel Hour. For 17 years wrote the GA Senior Quarterly (1 1/2 years), the GA Adult Quarterly (10 1/2 years) and the GA Annual Lesson Commentary (Companion) (5 years). Instructor: Online Academy of Biblical Studies (OABS), Dyersburg, TN. Local work for more than 49 years. Local Preacher, Ripley church of Christ, Ripley, Tennessee since 1974.

Ladies' Lectures

**The Woman
In Proverbs**

this page left intentionally blank

CHAPTER 33

The Gracious Woman

(Proverbs 11:16)

Irene Taylor

Introduction

WHEN WE THINK OF one who is gracious, we usually picture a lady who is stylishly dressed, meticulously groomed from head to toe, who carries herself with poise and speaks in a soft, pleasant voice. She has a warm smile and impeccable manners. Her speech is characterized with proper grammar. She entertains with style yet makes her guests feel welcome and at ease. Perhaps the foregoing description brings to the mind of each of us a particular lady. But true graciousness goes beyond the surface, penetrating into one's heart and soul.

The Bible describes the gracious lady as one who "retaineth honour" (Prov. 11:16). She is one who is kind and loving. Her conduct is of the highest standard, both in her own life and in her relationship with family and associates. She is known as a woman of her word. Her words are both kind and wise. The writer of Ecclesiastes confirms that the "words of a wise man's mouth are gracious" (Eccl. 10:12). Here the word "man's" is used generically and includes both man and woman. The gracious woman will **taste** her words, being careful to speak the **truth** in love (Eph. 4:15).

The term lady, properly understood, conjures up a picture of high conduct. It is most regrettable that society

has allowed prostitutes to be designated as **ladies** of the night! Ladies they are not!! Such designation for women of low repute besmears the image of a term meant to depict beauty of conduct. A real lady is one who is true to her commitment to God above. He reigns supreme in her life, and His will is the standard governing her conduct.

For our study we will look at some of the fine attributes found in one who is truly gracious. Her grooming is within, where it really matters.

G Is For Godly

There is a definite standard of lifestyle for one who is godly. Such a life observes some definite do's and don'ts. We are told, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men" (Prov. 4:14). The Psalmist pronounces a blessing on the man "that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psm. 1:1). Paul warns us to abstain from the very appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). We must **deny** ungodliness and worldly lusts (Tit. 2:12). We are **in** this world, but we are not to be of the world (John 17:14-16; 1 John 2:16).

There are likewise things we must do. After becoming a child of God through Gospel obedience, we are to grow in "grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). With faith as our foundation, we are to add those beautiful Christian graces: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity or love. This is the Christian octave, and it enables us to "sing" the song of Christianity throughout life.

The gracious lady understands the beauty of living "soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Tit. 2:12). In a world which majors in the base and sensual, she exemplifies the good found only in living by God's standards. It is sad beyond measure to watch our public

figures descend to the pits of degeneracy. Entertainment personalities who once portrayed characters of class in movies, television, etc. now consider it a mark of distinction to portray the wanton and immoral.

R Is For Reverent

In contrast to a world which all but laughs in the face of God, the gracious lady is one who is filled with a deep respect and reverence toward Him Who is Creator of all things. Her goal in life is to serve Him (Heb. 12:28). She treasures the truth of His Word (Psm. 119:160-161). She knows it is God's inspired Word, that it is infallible, all-sufficient, and eternal.

There is within her the deep desire to know more and more of God's truth. She recognizes that her life is made pure by heeding His will (Psm. 119:9). Note the emphasis on learning and obeying God's statutes in the writings of the Psalmist:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever (Psm. 111:10).

With my whole heart I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Psm. 119:10-11).

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day (Psm. 119:97).

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Psm. 119:105).

Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way (Psm. 119:128).

Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful (Psm. 119:138).

The gracious lady delights in worship to God (Psm. 122:1; Heb. 10:25). She is happy when it is time to fellowship with fellow Christians in public worship services. God is the center of her life (Matt. 6:33).

This lady's speech is pure (Tit. 2:8). Profanity would never spew from her mouth (Jas. 3:10-11). Never would she desecrate the precious name of the Lord (Psm. 111:9; Exod. 20:7). The world about us no longer holds the high and holy name of Jehovah in reverence. From every avenue of public media, from the highest officials to the child on the street, God's name is degraded. Let something go amiss, and we hear God's name profaned. Let some good fortune occur, and the world **still** uses His name profanely. It has become an all-too-common byword, and too many of His professing children have joined in the practice. Not so with the gracious lady!

A Is For Active

It never has been a part of God's plan for man to be idle. In the paradise of Eden, man was assigned work to do. He was instructed to dress and keep the beautiful garden (Gen. 2:15). Nor will idleness be found in heaven (Rev. 4; Rev. 5; Rev. 15).

The worthy woman is preciously portrayed in Proverbs 31. One cannot but be impressed by the varied activities in which she is engaged. Her scope of good covers far and wide and is an inspired model for all posterity.

Every gracious lady is queen of her home whether she is married or not. The wise man of Proverbs declares, "Every wise woman buildeth her house" (Prov. 14:1). To build a house (home) takes continued effort. It takes wisdom and a desire to make that home strong and secure. Most anyone can destroy a home, and too many do just that! It takes no real talent to accomplish. It takes ability mixed with abiding love to build a happy home. The gracious lady does it.

There are many examples of gracious women in the Bible. The story of Naomi and Ruth pictures two whose lives were intertwined in serving God and helping one another. Esther was one whose devotion to God and her fellow countrymen resulted in the saving of her people. God's gracious lady will always do the right.

There is much to be done for the Lord in our time. No one need be idle who truly wants to serve. One who is gracious readily serves wherever there is a need. She does not waste precious time demanding to serve in a capacity never intended for her. She doesn't demand a position where she may be seen but quietly fills her role wherever and whenever possible. She is a true **servant** in God's army. She gives full support to the "troops," all the while appreciating the fact that God has protected her from dangerous front lines.

C Is For Contented

Contentment is such a beautiful attribute and yet one which seems so illusive for so many, even among God's children. But it need not be so. It is a part of the gracious lady.

The secret to contentment is revealed in the Bible:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

The Hebrews writer advises, "be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5). Therein is our problem. Our "wants" exceed our "haves," and we become frustrated with our lot in life. We forget to be thankful for the multitude of "haves" which God has given us because we are so intent in obtaining our "wants." Ingratitude is our besetting sin! Contentment is not ingrained in mankind. It must be

learned. Paul declares, “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phil. 4:11). We, too, must **learn** the art of contentment.

A marvelous example of the contented lady is found in 2 Kings 4. This lady from Shunem had extended hospitality to the prophet Elisha by providing him a room to use as he traveled to their area. This he greatly appreciated. Wishing to show his appreciation, he wanted to do some great deed for her. He requested his servant, Gehazi, to inquire of her what could be done:

And he said unto him, say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people (2 Kings 4:13).

Here was one who knew real contentment. Offered an audience with a dignitary of her time, she declined. She was perfectly content remaining with her people, just being who she was. How many of us would have such little interest in meeting our president or the queen of England?! If we could grasp her quality of contentment, we would more comfortably function cheerfully in the sphere where God intended.

I Is For Industrious

Being industrious and active go hand-in-hand. Perhaps **industrious** goes a step beyond active. One may be willingly active when **assigned** a task by someone else. One who is industrious does not always wait for assignment. She **looks** for a work and then does it. Again, look at the life of that worthy or gracious lady in Proverbs 31. She not only took care of her own home and family, but she also cared for the needs of those about her. In order to do this, she involved herself in industry, earning

the means to accomplish her goal. Her pace of life would be a challenge for any of us today!

We women today have so many, many conveniences and yet accomplish so little for the Lord far too often. Those industrious women before us, both in Bible times and in more recent history, made time for family and friends more readily than do we. Those Christian ladies had a loyalty to the Lord that too frequently is lacking today. This writer suspects that the reason behind this is simple. Our conveniences have freed us to be involved in the work world, the civic and social activities of our community, our children's school activities, and in recreation to the point that we have little time left for the Lord. None of the listed activities are necessarily wrong in and of themselves but we **make** them wrong when we allow them to rob God of His rightful allegiance and neglect God-ordained family responsibilities.

Let us be industrious but industrious in the right areas. Let us keep our priorities in proper order. This the gracious lady does.

O Is For Obedient

The word "obey" is outmoded in the minds of many in our time. The philosophy of Khrushchev is all too popular in today's society. He once boasted, "International treaties are like pie crusts—made to be broken." Today's people ignore, flaunt, and outright disobey the laws of God and the laws of the land. **Respect for law begins in the home.** Until homes set standards or laws and enforce them, our children will not learn to respect or obey laws and authority in any realm. Until the home fulfills its rightful function, we will continue to have the mass disrespect for the right to expect that our properties be respected and our very lives safe from harm.

Obedience originates in the heart. Unless the heart is trained early to **desire** to obey, it will never happen. It is, therefore, of primary importance that we keep our heart pure: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

The gracious lady is an example of one who places a premium on obedience. She is keenly aware of the need to keep God at the helm of control. When faced with the conflict of whether to obey God's law or man's, she, with Peter and the other apostles, declares, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

U Is For Useful

There is much work for the gracious lady to do for the Lord's cause. She drinks not of the cup of idleness (Prov. 18:9; Prov. 31:27). She is one who sees a need and accepts the opportunity to fill it. She views the Lord's work through the eye of "Why don't I?," rather than "Why don't you?" fill the need. Many of us are proficient at spotting a need, but we see it for someone else to do. We seem to feel little responsibility to do our own service toward the success of any given program.

The gracious lady is busy strengthening the ties which bind her with her husband. She majors in being a **help meet** for him (Gen. 2:18; Prov. 12:4). She is there to aid and support him in his every endeavor for good. Like Sarah, she respects her husband's role as head of the home and turns a deaf ear to the cries of the malcontents of our day (1 Pet. 3:6; Eph. 5:23). The gracious lady is one who **builds** her home (Prov. 9:1; Prov.14:1). She understands the value of harmony in the home and carefully directs the tune of the home. She is busy **training** her children and counseling them in the way of the Lord (Prov. 22:6). Many of life's lessons are learned at the feet of Mother. God has placed a trust unparalleled in the hands of Mother.

Character traits of respect for authority of all kinds, honesty, industry, the concept of true love, and commitment are but a few of life's lessons which must be taught in the home by **word** and **example**. The gracious lady accepts the **privilege** and recognizes the grave **responsibility** inherent in the role of motherhood. In few other ways will she be more useful to the Master's cause than by rearing her children to be His obedient servants throughout life.

She is careful to set a proper example to those about her. It is vital that the woman of God portray the beauty of holiness. The attitude of "It is no one's business what I do or where I go" will not be a part of her philosophy. Instead, she will exercise great care to do right under any given circumstance.

The support of sound doctrine given by the gracious lady cannot be gainsaid. Like Priscilla and Aquila, who faithfully assisted Paul, she will be a supporter and encourager of sound Gospel preaching. False teachers will find no haven in her thinking or her home (2 John 9-11).

S Is For Selfless

For years society has been inflicted with the plague of "I" disease. Just about every segment of society has, at one time or another, demanded that its rights be given precedent over others. Such cannot be a part of the Christian's makeup.

It is difficult to think of one unselfish without at least giving mention to the worthy woman. Her portrait is so colored with the deeds she has done for family and those in need that she shines forth the spirit of unselfishness.

The New Testament likewise reveals those whose selflessness is an example for our emulation. Priscilla and Aquila, already mentioned as useful to Paul in his work, are also examples of unselfishness in their devoted service to Paul, to the point of risking their own lives for him

(Rom. 16:3-4). The early Christians were unselfish in possessions with those in need (Acts 4:32). Dorcas is the very personification of selflessness. At her death the widows presented garments that she had lovingly made for them (Acts 9:39). There is no indication given that she was a woman of wealth. We, too, can share what we have with those in need. Often, material possessions are not the thing most needed. Many times a sympathetic, supportive hand means more than money.

The Bible commands that Christians be characterized by the beautiful trait of unselfishness. We are to abound in good works (1 Cor. 15:58). Our deeds are to be done to all men, especially those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). The inspired definition of pure religion is "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). This is more than a social call. It involves compassion and supplying the needs of those visited.

L Is For Loving

Jesus declared, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Our loyalty to God and His will is a test of our love for Him. If we truly love Him, we will not balk or quibble at obeying those things He requires of His children.

The beautiful description of love reveals the attributes which must be added to our lives if we are to be pleasing to God. This is love that is real. Of all the attributes which make up one's character, love alone will follow us into eternity. God is love, and we must be loving to be like Him (1 John 4:7-8). Love works "no ill to his neighbor" but rather desires what is best for another (Rom. 13:10).

There are many things which inspiration has forever linked and that man must never sever. Love and truth are so linked (2 John 3). We are to speak the truth always,

but we are to speak it in love (Eph. 4:15). A harsh, unkind, sarcastic presentation of truth may forever close the door of opportunity. A soft answer may keep it open. Perhaps we need to stop and think how we would feel if we were on the receiving end of such a presentation.

A gentle, loving demeanor attracts and enhances the image of a truly, gracious lady. Such should characterize the Christian as well.

A Is For Attractive

Following the discussion of love and its beautiful attributes, we can readily understand the attractiveness of Christianity. The gracious lady is filled with the inward charm that comes from serving God. While youth is filled with a fresh vitality that has its own significant beauty, who will argue against the attractiveness of the gracious lady, whose years of quiet devotion to things high and holy are unmistakably a part of her life? Her Christian living has given her an attractiveness and beauty that sets her apart from the world. Clean, pure living brings a reward all its own, and it shows in one's face. The gracious lady is one whose very countenance shines forth the beauty of God's design. She is proud to be a woman of God, and her inner grace shows on her face.

The gracious lady exercises care in her outward appearance as well as that of her inner self. She welcomes the opportunity to dress as a lady and show her pleasure that God has made her such. She accepts with grace the command to dress in modest attire in harmony with a life of holiness (1 Tim. 2:9). She understands that, as a child of the King, she must dress in keeping with her status. Not only does she dress modestly, she dresses appropriately for the occasion. She recognizes the vast difference in attire appropriate for a sporting event and attire appropriate for worship to the God of heaven. Our

attire says much about our attitude toward any given event. The casual attire now present at our worship services reflects a casualness in attitude which has contributed to a lack of serious respect needed in our approach to worship. The lax dress seems to go hand-in-hand with the lax practices which presently invade the worship assembly in too many congregations. The gracious lady does her part in dressing in such fashion as to portray an element of dignity to the worship offered to God above.

D Is For Dedication

Dedication is close adherence to a cause. It is being dependable when dependability counts. God needs those whose dedication to His cause is unwavering. In the words of the beautiful, thought-provoking song, "Can He Depend On You?," each of us needs to examine herself and give an honest answer to that piercing question. **Can He?** Are we ready and willing to answer affirmatively when a specific need arises? What does it take to cause us to "lose heart" and defect from service? The gracious lady steps forward voluntarily. There is no **drafting** in God's army! We "sign on" because we want to.

When a work is begun, do we see it through to the end? There is a principle recorded in Romans 12:11 for those engaged in the Lord's work: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit." If most of us conducted our personal business in the same way we pursue the Lord's work, we would go bankrupt in a hurry! The gracious lady is dedicated to service and is pleased to do so within the framework of the Lord's prescribed limitations.

Y Is For Yourself

Each of us has personal needs, and these must be given proper attention. If we are to grow and develop into the gracious lady God would have us become, we must

spend time and exert the necessary effort to reach our goal. We cannot slide into heaven; we must **plan** to go there and **travel** the right road.

Developing a **wholesome** self-image is essential, for, if one cannot respect oneself, how can we respect others? The operative word is **wholesome**. We must not think of ourselves “more highly than we ought to think” (Rom. 12:3). There is no tune so sour as the tune sung by one who praises self! The Bible addresses this problem: “Let another man praise thee, and **not thine own mouth**; a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Prov. 27:2, emp. mine, IT).

We must **know** the Scriptures if we are to teach others, and this can be accomplished best by individual study (2 Tim. 2:15): “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). A blessing awaits those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). Be true to oneself, and it will be easier to be true to the Lord and those about you.

Conclusion

The gracious lady is one who has exercised great care to her grooming within and without. She has devoted her life to the pure and holy, filling her mind with the good (Phil. 4:8). It is from the contents of the heart (the mind) that our words are framed (Matt. 12:34). We are not what we think we are; we are what we think (Prov. 23:7). We see, then, the urgency of keeping our heart free from impurity (Prov. 4:23). Knowing that what goes in eventually comes out, care must be taken regarding what goes in!

The gracious lady is careful to guard her good name and that of her family. Our reputation must be kept good if we are to be productive servants in the Kingdom. It matters greatly what others think of us: “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold” (Prov. 22:1).

“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30).

The Gracious Lady

What is there about her
That sets her apart?
What makes us all love her
With all of our heart?

Is it due to great beauty
Which pleases us much?
Is it her sweet manner?
Her kind, gentle touch?

Or does it go deeper?
Does it come from within,
This glow that impresses
And our hearts quickly win?

Ah, yes! It is from much deeper,
This beauty she shows.
It's a reflection of Jesus
The Master she knows.

Her life's filled with goodness,
Of service to Him.
She gives herself freely,
Lost souls tries to win.

This lady is special!
She works for the Lord.
And this is the reason
She's so greatly adored!

by Irene Taylor



About The Author

Native of Idaho. Married to Robert R. Taylor, Jr., 2 children, 4 grandchildren. Graduate: Freed Hardeman College. Regular speaker at 6-8 Ladies Day programs each year. Speaker for Ladies on various lectureships. Author: *Pearls Of Poetry*. Taylor's completed their 29th year with the Ripley church of Christ, Ripley, TN in August of 2003.

CHAPTER 34

The Woman With The Attire Of An Harlot

(Proverbs 7:10)

Celicia Grider

Introduction

WHILE MENTALLY PREPARING THE skeleton outline for this particular manuscript, my family and I made a trip to the local mall. I observed the attire of the young people shopping. May I say that I saw more flesh than I wanted to see. I was astounded how that so many young people dress in most immodest fashions. It was more of a shock to me that the parents of these children let them go out practically naked. It is no wonder that some of these parents end up ignorantly asking why their daughters have premarital sex and have children out of wedlock. Most people's pajamas cover more of the body than a lot of the styles young people are wearing today. Then, as if witnessing all of this immodesty was not enough, I entered the maternity section, which should be styled very differently, yet there are no dresses or skirts that resemble modesty at all. After the evening out, I was so glad to come home and get busy on this manuscript. We, as Christian women and especially mothers, have an awesome task to instill God's principles into our children—more specifically, the principles found in His Word regarding modesty and dress.

The world in which we currently live is plagued with immodest fashions. You don't have to be looking to discover

what little clothing people wear these days, especially our young people. Styles are revealing and no longer reflect the way our Father wants our outward appearance to be. The evidence of immodesty is present now, more than ever, considering that the summer months are here. As the snakes shed their skin in the spring of the year, man sheds his clothes. This ought not to be! Discussion on modesty is not an exhausted subject, and, when spoken about, it is often ignored. Unfortunately, because of our dress, there is little distinction anymore between members of the church and the world. We are becoming desensitized to the immodesty that surrounds us. We no longer blush at the fashions that are currently being worn. How are we to bring others to Christ by being different, if we all wear the same kind of immodest apparel? How can our light shine if we are not willing to stand up and be different?

“A Woman With The Attire of An Harlot”

Let us consider Proverbs 7:10 in detail, and then we can draw lessons about modest apparel. This will be done in a threefold lesson. We will discuss dress, the do's and don'ts of modesty, and the dress code for the child of God. Solomon writes, “And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart” (Prov. 7:10). In this scene, we see a married woman dressed like a prostitute, approaching this young man who is void of understanding (Prov. 7:7). The clothing she wears identifies her as a harlot.¹ She is merely trying to satisfy her evil desires. She does this by enticing him with words, strong-smelling perfume, provocative clothing—all the characteristics indicative of a prostitute. A Christian man would have no business being in this place, yet that is how Satan works. The temporary passions of the lustful flesh can blind a man and cause him to do things that are forbidden by our Lord, even for a moment's pleasure. The

flip side of this coin would be that no Christian husband should allow his wife to dress in such an immodest fashion, nor should he tolerate her behaving in such a seductive, appealing way.

She proceeds to seduce this young man who is a simpleton. We are warned by Peter to “Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). This young man falls into her trap. She, like a wild animal, finds the man she will devour, and convinces him to yield to her desires.² She was certainly dressed for the part of a prostitute. Although many people today, both young and old, have no intentions of being dressed like a prostitute, many are in actuality doing just that.

What Is Modest Apparel

After examining the Scripture in Proverbs, we can begin by discussing dress. The accepted attire by God is not what is seen in today’s fashions. We must teach our children that being “in style” is not the most important thing to consider when dress is being discussed. Simply stated, today’s fashions are not and never will be God’s fashions. None of us has any business dressing in the revealing clothing of which the world approves. In today’s world, we strive to improve our appearance and maintain our youthfulness. When we try to accomplish this, it has the tendency to lead to immodesty. Some Christians do not seem to realize the importance of proper dress and the necessity of covering one’s body. Paul admonished:

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

This passage discusses the problem of women who were, during this time, seeking to call attention to themselves by the clothing they wore. This kind of adornment is not defining of a Christian woman. Good works in the service of our Lord should be our goal rather than the outward appearance.

Webster defines “modest” as “freedom from conceit or vanity; propriety in dress, speech, or conduct; unpretentious.” Expanded, this means that modest dress not only covers enough of the body to avoid inciting lust in an observer, but also includes not calling undue attention to ourselves, even though thoroughly covered.³

The opposite word to define next would be immodest. Webster defines “immodest” as “impudent, indecent, brazen, forward, bold, brash, shameless, shameful, indecorous, and wanton.” These definitions show the contrast between being modest and immodest. Another word that comes to mind is purity or innocence; these can be maintained only when the rules of modesty are applied to one’s physical appearance. When we dress modestly, we do not draw attention to our bodies. In fact, it is our outward appearance that reflects to the world what is in our hearts (Prov. 27:19).

When the discussion of dress presents itself, one may ask, “Why is there such an obvious lack of morality among the women in this day and age?” The answers are obvious. There is an ignorance of modesty versus immodesty, a definite lack of training, and for many there is a stronger desire for worldly popularity and the outright desire to attract sensual attention.

In an article entitled “Dressing Down America” in the workplace, consider the list of fashions they named as unacceptable:

Halter or tank tops
Jogging suits or other exercise clothes

Jeans and T-shirts
Spaghetti straps, backless or strapless dresses
Clothing that was too tight or too short

A common-sense statement was made that, if a woman must keep tugging at her skirt when she sits, then it is too short! It was also stated that, if her attire causes the men at the water fountain to turn and ogle her, it is also inappropriate.⁴ How hard is it for us to come to that same conclusion?

Some Do's And Don'ts Regarding Our Dress

Next, we must consider some do's and don'ts regarding our outward appearance. This section of the lesson will be devoted mainly to those of us who are parents. We have an awesome responsibility to teach by example and through our authority as parents to our children the do's and don'ts of our outward appearance. This begins very early in life. We must not let our little girls wear skimpy, short dresses while they are little and then, when they become young ladies, tell them, "you must start dressing modestly now." We cannot let our children dress like the world if we are going to teach them to be different. Our example must be evident of our beliefs. We should not walk around our home immodestly and then expect our children to always be modest. Discussion of modest dress can be a sensitive subject between mothers and their sons and daughters.

By the same token, modesty is something that is taught and practiced. It is important to try and allow our children to discover the difference between modesty and immodesty. This can be accomplished when you accompany your child to the mall to purchase clothing. This can be a difficult task because of the recent styles. Fashion designers are not making "Sunday clothes," and the ones out there are quite questionable. Persuading remarks can

be made on how a certain piece of clothing is not fit for a young Christian lady or man to wear. Sometimes, as parents, we have to just say “no” to a desired piece of clothing that our young person wants to buy. We must hold the line to what is right. We must teach our children that we cannot be conformed to this world. Paul tells us:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

As parents of boys and girls, we need to be on guard with their outside attire. So many times when immodesty is mentioned, one thinks of females who are dressed inappropriately. Reality is that it can be applied to both males and females. However, since males are much more easily enticed, we as Christian women must be extremely cautious in choosing our clothing. We should not use our bodies to reveal nakedness or to possibly incite evil thoughts in those who see us. This must be taught to our boys and girls and especially guarded in the summer months when outside attire seems to be especially short and scarce.

It must be stressed that it is the inward appearance that matters. The outward appearance diminishes with age, but the inward beauty lasts forever. A familiar Scripture, written in 1 Peter 3:3-4, speaks of that inner person:

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quite spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Some have erroneously concluded from this passage that a woman should not wear make-up or jewelry, or coiffure her hair. If this were true, we also would conclude from the passage that a woman should not wear clothes! Such reasoning would be absurd! Peter is saying in this passage that a woman should never use outward ornaments to hide her inward beauty, but rather such should enhance her inward beauty.

Let us consider some Old Testament characters who presented beautiful inward appearances. In the book of Esther, we read about the beautiful and virtuous Queen Vashti. She was very modest, which is something that is quickly diminishing in today's world. She was different in that her outward clothing demonstrated her inner beauty. Esther, who followed virtuous Vashti, also possessed an inner beauty. A modest spirit is the most precious jewel which nature grants to women, and, when it is sanctified by the fear of God and the love of Jesus, its power as an instrument of good is wonderfully increased.⁵ We must be reminded that the outward beauty fades with time, but the inward beauty will last forever. There is a very good lesson we learn from Esther just before she was appointed queen. In Esther 2, we see that she did not concern herself with the outward ornaments that were being used by the other virgins prior to seeing the King. The inner beauty and grace of Esther went far deeper than her physical beauty.⁶

Consider also Rebekah. In Genesis 24:65, we read the following: "For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself." Her actions are indicative of both politeness and proper etiquette. These are beautiful attributes in a woman. A woman of elegance and of good manners ought to be a top priority when searching for a

bride. We learn from Rebekah that she was concerned and committed to the modest customs of her day. She was willing to subject herself to the proper behavior necessary in order to be pleasing to Jehovah God.

A Divine Dress Code

Finally, we need to address decency and see what Christ's dress code is for His child. The Scriptures are not explicit in providing an exact definition of appropriate attire in worship. We do know we should give God our best. However, your best may not be my best. We must practice what James tells us:

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? (Jas. 2:1-4).

When we worship, it must come from the heart. But if you knew Christ was going to be at the services, in the flesh, would you not be concerned about your decorum? Our outward attire reveals our inward heart and our attitude toward God. A good question to ask as we clothe ourselves each day would be, "Do our clothes, jewelry, makeup, and appearance in general reflect a Christian image?" If it does not, then we must make the necessary changes.

Consider this excerpt from an article entitled "Immodesty Revealed More Than Flesh" by Louise Burger:

Men throughout the brotherhood have expressed shock by what is revealed of the feminine anatomy as they pass communion trays down

the aisles during worship. What style is the world enticing Christian women to bring into the worship assembly? Bare shoulders, exposed midriffs, and short, thigh-exposing skirts and shorts are becoming increasingly common—even in our church buildings.⁷

Although the importance of decency should be considered in every outfit we put on, I think one specific area is that of dating. This certainly applies to our young ladies! We must be aware of what our children are wearing when they leave the home for a particular outing with friends. Sometimes, as God's children, we often seek to get as close to sin as possible without actually crossing the line. This is true with the way we dress or the way we allow our children to dress, and sometimes we willingly cross over that line. Perhaps it would be good to remember the following adage:

If it's too tight, it's not right.
If it's above the thigh, it's too high.
If it's too low, change before you go.

Conclusion

Considering some of the things we have discussed, I think it would be beneficial to mention at the close that immodesty does not always imply that skin is exposed. Sometimes a person can be fully clothed but be just as immodest as someone who is barely wearing a stitch of clothing. The fit of clothes must be examined and, if need be, changed if the previous first line of the adage applies.

It should be the goal of every child of God to do what is pleasing in His sight. This includes the realms of clothing, fashion, and modesty. We must be willing to be different in this world that is smothered in immodest, provocative, revealing fashion trends, and we must show people the proper dress code taught by our Lord. This is done through examples and lessons taught at home. This

can be accomplished when we regularly teach on the subject of modesty to our young ladies. The women who teach the young girls (as they are commanded in Titus 2:3-5) have a great responsibility, as do the ones who hear the lessons to take heed to God's Word regarding modesty. Some young ladies would be very upset if they were accused of being promiscuous. Yet their clothing often reflects such.

We must say "no" to the disgusting fashions that are not pleasing to our Father. We have to train our children to have a desire to discern between what is modest and immodest, approved and not approved for the child of God to wear. We must let the Lord's will take priority in our decisions regarding our attire. As Christian wives and mothers, let us guard our appearance and that of our children, as well. If we will do this, we will bring glory to God and respect to our family.

Endnotes

1 **The Pulpit Commentary**, Volume 9 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) p. 155.

2 Ferman Carpenter, "God's Law, Keeping Man From Adultery," **Book Of Proverbs**, ed. Bill Jackson (Austin, TX: Southwest Publications), pp. 117-118.

3 Anita Whitaker, **Straddling The Fence** (Huntsville, AL: Publishing Designs), p. 31.

4 Esther Ebest, "Dressing Down America," **The Christian Woman**, ed. Sandra Humphrey (Nashville, TN: July/August, 2002), p. 28.

5 **The Pulpit Commentary**, Volume 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), p. 31.

6 Michael Hatcher, "Ahasuerus Rejects Vashti and Selects Esther as Queen of Persia," **Studies In Ezra, Nehemiah And Esther**, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications), p. 288.

7 Louise Burger, "Immodesty Revealed More Than Flesh," **The Christian Woman** (Nashville, TN: July/August 2003).



About The Author

Native of Tennessee. Married to Barry Grider, 2 children and third to be born in September. Graduate: Freed Hardeman University (B. A.). Local work in AL, TN. Missionary trip with her husband to Jamaica. Speaker at ladies' classes and various ladies' days. Presently working with the Forest Hill church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee.

CHAPTER 35

The Foolish Woman

(Proverbs 14:1)

Tish Clarke

Introduction

EVERY WISE WOMAN BUILDETH her house: but **the foolish plucketh it down with her hands**" (Prov. 14:1, emp. mine throughout, TC).

Imagine a quiet, well-established neighborhood with beautiful homes on every lane and cul-de-sac. Each dwelling place is unique and bursting with charm. Fragrant blossoms, luscious sod, and artfully manicured bushes make up the design of each yard. In many flower beds are cement statues of laughing children and bird baths and fountains—each scene lovelier than the last. Hummingbirds flit to and fro from feeders, dangling from tall, stately oak trees. Window boxes overflowing with petunias, impatiens, and ivy provide wondrous color to the windows of the homes. Sparkling panes of glass invite us to come inside and see the beauty which **must** exist within these delightful homes. A home of this caliber **must** have an amazing woman overseeing its care. Matthew paints an even more vivid picture when he records the Words of Christ:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which
indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within
full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:27-28).

So it is with our verse, “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but **the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.**” A foolish woman may have a beautifully maintained home in the outward appearance. However, this verse is not speaking to the “physical” home which is destroyed by a foolish woman. While it is true that a lazy woman will run a house into the ground, it is the moral fiber and spiritual welfare of the home with which this verse is concerned. Proverbs 14:1 clearly teaches that wisdom builds but folly destroys. Since it is the case that one cannot tell from the physical beauty of the home whether a virtuous woman or a foolish woman dwells on the inside, we must look to the woman who dwells inside.

As we begin a discussion of the foolish woman, it is clear that she has a heart condition. One cannot always tell from looking at the outward appearance if the heart is soft and godly, or hard and wicked. Eventually, the folly from within her heart makes itself known by her actions, attitudes, desires, and priorities. However, some of the characteristics of the foolish woman may be found in each one of us. Therefore, we must examine our heart and determine if the Great Physician (Luke 5:31-32) would find the beginnings of a deadly disease within its walls. Proverbs 9:13 states, “A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.” Strong’s defines “clamorous” as “to cry aloud, be disquieted, make a noise, rage, roar, make in tumult, be in an uproar.”¹ When both of these verses are put together, we have a clear picture of the foolish woman. She is one who wreaks havoc in her home, she is unlearned in the Scriptures, and she ultimately destroys the very home God has charged her with building up (Tit. 2:5). We shall see that the foolish

woman is spiritually hollow, self-centered, and has a lack of self control.

How Spiritually Hollow She Is

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.” This verse is found in Psalm 14:1 and repeated for good measure in Psalm 53:1. It is interesting to note that **Psalm 14:1** declares the root of the problem of the fool: unbelief in God; **Proverbs 14:1** states the outcome of this unbelief: the fool destroys the home. At the heart of her disease is a disregard for God. Even if she is a believer, she is not obedient to His commands, her actions are declaring there is no God. How sad to find at the core of a home a woman with the heart of a fool! Psalm 92: 1-4 are verses in praise to God for His love, faithfulness, and wonderful works. The next two verses (Psm. 92:5-6) contrast how great the Lord is and how little the fool understands: “O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; **neither doth a fool understand this.**” What does the fool not understand? How great and marvelous are the works of our God!

The children’s song, “The Wise Man Builds His House,” is based on the parable Christ told in Matthew 7:24-27:

I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

As a Bible class teacher, did you realize that you were instilling a foundation of wisdom in the children as you sang this with them? It would be a good teaching tool to remind the children what the sand and rock represent. So often we sing songs with the children and fail to apply the Biblical meaning to the song. A wise Bible class teacher will not use songs just to fill up time, and, in this case, you may be helping to grow future wise Christians and not foolish ones.

Considering the fact that we are examining our own lives through this lesson, to cull out foolish behavior, what have you placed your beliefs in? Are they based in the solid rock of the Word of God? Or are they based in your own human wisdom and folly? There is no surer way to destroy a home than to found it upon human folly. Because they would not be obedient to the truth, Paul called the Galatians foolish (Gal. 3:1-4).

An example of a foolish woman is Bernice in Acts 25-26. Acts 25:23 declares that, after King Agrippa and his sister Bernice entered into the city of Caesarea, Festus asked them to listen to Paul, a prisoner, state his case. As befitting a king and his relative, they entered into the place of hearing with great pomp and ceremony. The rest of Acts 25, and most of Acts 26, record the testimony that Paul gave to his audience. He details his conversion, the death and resurrection of Christ and how this is a fulfillment of the prophets. Paul reminded King Agrippa that he was knowledgeable of the prophets, and, as such, King Agrippa was well aware of the truth that Paul stated. Gareth Reese, in his commentary, **The History Of Acts**, states:

Agrippa not only professed the Jewish religion, but also had been given certain administrative functions in connection with the temple and priesthood by the Roman government; he was

an expert in the Jewish religion. “Customs,” as it has several times before in Acts, has reference to the particular practices found in the Law of Moses. “Questions” would speak of the subjects of debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees. With all these Agrippa II was conversant.²

King Agrippa responded with one of the saddest sentences in the Bible: “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Acts 26:30 tells us that King Agrippa, Governor Festus, and Bernice arose and left the room. To have heard Paul preach the life-saving truth and turn away is nothing but pure folly. The **Woman’s Study Bible** comments on this sinful woman who had a chance at a better life:

Bernice heard Paul argue his case for Christ; yet she ignored his message. Maintaining her wicked ways, Bernice died in Rome after the fall of Jerusalem. Bernice represents all those women throughout history who have heard the [G]ospel, yet have chosen to reject Christ. She embraced a sinful life that caused the deterioration of her character—a character that could have been changed by Jesus Christ, making her useful in the Kingdom.³

What might have happened if she had listened to the Word spoken that day and believed in the Christ of salvation? It might very well be that she could have been the turning point for her brother, and they both could have been converted. Think what a king might have been able to accomplish, not only in his home, but in the public arena! What a sad day when they chose to remain in the dark and believe in their own human wisdom.

In the love story of Ruth, we often center on the wonderful statement that Ruth made to Naomi when she chose to follow after Naomi’s God. A wiser decision no woman could ever make. We know from her story that Ruth found true love with a man of God and became the

grandmother to David, king of Israel. Ruth could never be considered a foolish woman, but what of Orpah, her sister-in-law? What was her choice in the story? In Ruth 1:15 Naomi informs us of Orpah's decision: "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law." What wonderful blessings could have been in store for Orpah if she had chosen the wise path? Unfortunately, she made the foolish choice to reject God and return to her false idols.

We need to take a lesson from these women of the Bible. Do we reject the simple, plain truth of God's Word, as Bernice did in Acts? Do we choose the easier path, as Orpah did when she returned back to her godless people? The foolish woman is lacking in conviction and backbone. She is spiritually hollow, and this not only affects her life, but her choices will often manifest themselves in the lives of her husband and children. Abraham Lincoln said "No man is poor who has had a godly mother."⁴ In contrast, a home with a foolish woman at its helm is in the depths of poverty.

How Self-Centered She Is

James Dobson believes, "The philosophy of 'me first' has the power to blow our world to pieces, whether applied to marriage, business, or international politics."⁵ The selfish woman finds herself at the center of a household of problems—for herself and her family. Her self-centered attitude gives her a warped view of what should be important in her life: God, her soul, and her family. Unfortunately, she has no concern for those around her. Her wants, her wishes, and her desires are all-consuming. She is like the rich fool in Luke 12:16-19:

The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within **himself**, saying, What shall **I** do, because **I** have no room

where to bestow my fruits? And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow **my** fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down **my** barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all **my** fruits and **my** goods. And I will say to **my** soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

Her sole purpose is to provide for her selfish desires and she has no vision for the needs of others around her. God would answer the foolish woman as He did the rich fool in Luke 12:20: “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” The selfish woman believes she is in control of her life; however, God reminds her that one day she will have to answer for her behavior. Anyone who has the misfortune to live with a selfish woman lives in misery. The foolish woman conveys her selfishness by being materialistic and manipulative in her relationships.

Many years ago, there was a woman who had a loving husband and three young children. This woman was consumed with possessions—how much she had, her standing in society, and how fast the next purchase could be made. She maxed out credit cards, juggled jobs, and gained more credit cards. As her children grew to maturity, it was clear her possessions were first in her life. Her children gradually grew to realize that, no matter how hard they tried to please her, they could not turn her heart in their direction. These children have had to look to others to find their value—something that should have been instilled by their mother. She sacrificed motherhood for more, More, **MORE!**

Her husband doted on her every wish and tried to make her happy. Because of her insatiable appetite for more things which he simply could not continue to afford, she belittled him and told him he was worthless. She left

him when it was clear she would not have the lifestyle she felt she deserved. He was devastated, and it took him many years to recover. Ironically, within a few years of the divorce, she had to file bankruptcy. Her spending habits quickly made it necessary to obtain a second job. After all, she needed the extra money to provide for the new car, stylish condominium, and latest fashions. Her appearance meant everything to her. She had two large, walk-in closets overflowing with an incredible amount of designer clothes, shoes, and accessories. Her condominium was filled with expensive, fashionable furniture. Even with the addition of the second full-time job, she had no money left for savings.

When her health took a drastic turn for the worse, she lost everything. Her quest for more things and her selfish nature have left her bereft of a loving family and husband. She realized all too late that she had made many terrible decisions based in foolish desires. Her love of things cost her dearly: her health, her family, and, as of this writing, she has not turned back to God and repented of forsaking her Christian walk. Christ taught in Luke 12:15, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: **for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.**” A life built upon possessions is indeed empty at the end of the path.

Solomon increased his possessions and riches in order to find happiness. In Ecclesiastes 2:4-10, he details all the many things he owned:

I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in

Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

Solomon discovered, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity” (Eccl. 5:10). How many times do we women place too much value in the clothes we wear, the homes we live in, and the furnishings in our home? We need to realize that love of things is foolishness and a sin. It will bring about death to our soul, our greatest possession.

A story is told of Rose Greenhow, a Confederate spy during the Civil War, who tried to evade capture and the loss of her fortune by sewing the gold she had gained into the seams of her dress. But the ship she boarded sank, and the weight of the gold made it impossible for the life-preserver to support her. She sank to the bottom with all her wealth. Dr. Pierce Harris, who told the story, pointed out that death did to her what it does to all of us, because we “cannot take it with us” when we die. But sometimes, we might add, it takes us with it!⁶ Paul wrote to Timothy of the rich, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim. 6:9). Do we view our possessions as a temptation? If too high a value is placed on the multiplying of things in our lives, and this desire overrules our spiritual lives, it is certainly sin.

Our selfishness can cause us to be foolish women in the way we treat our families. Are you a wife who tears down her husband and children by your words and actions? Are you the kind of wife who belittles your husband's decision and who only relies on your solution to the problem? We need to be very careful about what we value. We may find out that, at the end of the road, we have lost our family because of our selfishness, and we may realize all too late what is truly priceless to us. What do we value in our lives above our souls? Is it dragging us to eternal torment?

How She Lacks Self-Control

The foolish woman exercises no control over her thoughts, her words, or her emotions. She has no eternal plans for her soul; this would involve too much work. There is no standard of selfless good for this woman. Some women simply do not have the backbone to be self-sacrificing. It is much simpler to be a jellyfish and flow with the ocean of worldly ambivalence. Whatever she feels is right for herself at any given time is what she pursues. No matter what it entails, her goal is her pleasure. Her lack of self-control manifests itself in her attitudes, her tongue, and her preparations for her eternal life.

It is a difficult thing to tame the tongue; in her mind she should be able to say and feel anything she desires. She is all important—no one else! The foolish woman finds herself among the gossipers and the liars of society. She lacks any control in her emotions. If she is angry, her temper flies off the handle. She is filled with self-importance, and words pour out of her mouth to convey this to all around her. An Arabian proverb states, "The fool has his answer on the edge of his tongue."⁷ Listen to the many verses which speak to the fool and his lips:

**Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger
resteth in the bosom of fools (Eccl. 7:9).**

The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright:
but the **mouth of fools** poureth out foolishness
(Prov. 15:2).

The heart of him that hath understanding
seeketh knowledge: but **the mouth of fools**
feedeth on foolishness (Prov. 15:14).

For **wrath killeth the foolish** man, and envy
slayeth the silly one (Job 5:2).

The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious;
but the **lips of a fool will swallow up himself**
(Eccl. 10:12).

A **fool is full of words**: a man cannot tell what
shall be; and what shall be after him, who can
tell him? (Eccl. 10:14).

Even so the tongue is a little member, and
boasteth great things. Behold, how great a
matter a little fire kindleth! And **the tongue is**
a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue
among our members, that it defileth the whole
body, and setteth on fire the course of nature;
and it is set on fire of hell (Jas. 3:5-6).

These verses detail the many sins involved in the fool's words and actions. It is certainly wise to "Think before you speak; silent sense is better than fluent folly."⁸

In our own lives, how many times have we wished that we could take a statement back? How often have we verbalized before we have internalized? Ecclesiastes 10:15 declares with irony, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." Keil and Delitzsch, in their **Commentary On The Old Testament**, explain this verse to mean, "The fool kindles himself up and perplexes himself, as if he could enlighten the world and make it happy—he who does not even know how to go to the city."⁹ We need to be very careful that we are not speaking as the foolish when we open our

mouths. Are we truly knowledgeable in what we are saying? It is a difficult thing to tame the tongue, and certainly in a foolish woman, the task would be nigh unto impossible! Our words can be our downfall, as Christ taught in Matthew 12:36-37:

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

The tongue is only conveying what the heart is thinking. Again, we see another disease of the heart in the foolish woman:

“The boneless tongue, so small and weak,
Can crush and kill,” declares the Greek.
“The tongue destroys a greater horde,”
The Turk asserts, “than does the sword.”
The Persian proverb wisely saith,
“A lengthy tongue—an early death!”
or sometimes takes this form instead,
“Don’t let your tongue cut off your head.”
“The tongue can speak a word whose speed,”
Say the Chinese, “outstrips the steed.”
The Arab sages said in part,
“The tongue’s great storehouse is the heart.”
From Hebrew was the maxim sprung,
“Thy fret should slip, but ne’er the tongue.”
The sacred writer crowns the whole,
“Who keeps the tongue doth keep his soul.”¹⁰

Do you find yourself constantly criticizing others? Do members in your family walk around on eggshells because they are afraid to upset the apple cart? Does your husband worry about what your tongue might reveal? If so, you need to realize that you lack self-control in the area of your tongue, and this is foolish and damning to your soul.

The foolish woman’s lack of self-control makes itself known in her spiritual preparations. At the heart of the

problem is laziness. As the women in Matthew 25 were called foolish for not filling their lamps with oil in order to be prepared for the bridegroom, so is the foolish woman who is not filling her mind with spiritual oil. Spiritual oil in the home would be found in daily Bible study time, a meaningful prayer life, dedication to the Lord's church in attendance and work, and ultimately transferring these traits to her children. The foolish woman "plucketh" her house down when she does not provide the spiritual qualities necessary to build up the inhabitants. Your husband should be able to trust in your ability to raise the children in a godly home. However, the foolish woman is too immersed in herself to train her children as is commanded in Deuteronomy 11:18-20:

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates.

The foolish woman is too concerned with herself to be able to commit the time to accomplish the above command. Sadly, she may not even feel it is necessary. We find this foolish trait in ourselves when we desire to fulfill the above commandment and yet fail to complete it because of a priority problem.

A foolish woman finds herself enthralled with the inane (and often wicked) talk shows, soap operas, and sitcoms on TV today. Many women listen with rapt attention to various "experts" on how to build healthy relationships, meet the man of your dreams, raise successful children, and learn how to be fulfilled in today's modern world. The steps to achieving these wonderful

events are laid out in ridiculous fashion by these “experts.” Women are told how to style their hair and make-up, what to wear, and how to think in order to be among the successful elite of this world. We are instructed on how to raise “successful” children by today’s standards, how to make ourselves happy, and what we deserve out of life. Oftentimes, through advice columns and articles, we are told to leave our husbands in order to find complete happiness—**whatever** would make us happy, do it! The success of “Reality TV” speaks volumes about the inane silliness found in the hearts of women today. On many of the dating shows, people are choosing their spouses based on looks and money. One show even has America choosing the person whom the contestant will marry in a nationwide vote. Magazines are sold by the millions which contain absurdly stupid ideas on how to be dominant in this world. Paul states that the wisdom of this world is foolishness compared to God (1 Cor. 1:19-20).

Women who are trying to follow after God need to be very concerned that they are not looking to these worldly sources for their wisdom. The foolish woman does not go to the correct source to obtain her knowledge. How often do you avail yourself of the Word of God? Do you begin your reading of the Bible faithfully in the new year, only to find yourself waning by February? Have you ever prayed to God asking Him for wisdom as Solomon did? Do we ask God to give us the strength to complete the walk to heaven? Or do we find ourselves as the foolish woman, as we saunter merrily down the path to destruction with not a thought in our head as to where our steps are leading us? The foolish woman lacks self control in many areas of her life as she blindly ventures toward her eternal destination.

In conclusion, the foolish woman of Proverbs 14:1 is spiritually hollow, self-centered, and lacking in self control. There could possibly be a bit of the fool in each one of us. We need to carefully examine our lives, our attitudes, our

desires, and our spiritual strength. If any symptoms of the heart disease of the fool be found in us, we need to quickly cut it out and save our souls. So often we are found to be the fool in the words that we speak to our family and acquaintances. This poem is a reminder that our words should be uttered carefully and not foolishly.

“Silver Boxes”

My words were harsh and hasty
 And they came without a thought.
 Then I saw the pain and anguish
 That my bitter words had brought.

Bitter words that I had spoken
 Made me think back through the past;
 Of how many times I'd uttered
 Biting words whose pain would last.

Then I wondered of the people
 I had hurt by things I'd said;
 All the ones I had discouraged
 When I didn't use my head.

Then I thought about my own life,
 Of painful words I've heard;
 And of the times I'd been discouraged
 By a sharp and a cruel word.

And now clearly I remember
 All the things I might have done;
 But, by a word I was discouraged
 And they never were begun.

Lord, help my words be silver boxes,
 Neatly wrapped up with a bow;
 That I give to all so freely,
 As through each day I gladly go.

Silver boxes full of treasure,
 Precious gifts from God above;
 That all the people I encounter
 Might have a box of God's own love
 —*Michael Bright (1989)*

Endnotes

1 **New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers And Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary** (Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, 1994).

2 Gareth L. Reese, **New Testament History: A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Book Of Acts** (College Press, 2002), p. 873.

3 **Woman's Study Bible** (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, copyright 1995).

4 Edythe Draper, **Draper's Book Of Quotations For The Christian World** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), entries 7847-7851.

5 *Ibid*, entries 10086-10087.

6 James S. Hewett, **Illustrations Unlimited** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), p. 339.

7 Draper, entries 4063-4067.

8 Vern McLellan, **The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs And Wacky Wit** (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

9 Keil & Delitzsch, **Commentary On The Old Testament**, New Updated Edition, Electronic Database (Hendrickson Publishers, 1996).

10 Hewett, p. 475.



About The Author

Native of Georgia. Married to B.J. Clarke, 3 children. Attended Freed Hardeman College. Presently attending Crichton College pursuing K-8 teacher certification. Speaker on several ladies' days each year. Blessed to work with the Southaven church of Christ, Southaven, MS, since 1991.

CHAPTER 36

The Virtuous Woman

(Proverbs 31:10-31)

Tish Clarke

Introduction

PROVERBS 1:8-9 BEGINS WITH an admonition from a father: “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.” Proverbs 31 begins with an admonition from a mother to her son: “The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?” (Prov. 31:1-2). It is fitting that a book filled with wise sayings would begin and end with a wise saying from a father and a mother.

The home is truly the heart of a nation and the church. History has proven that when the home breaks down, the nation is not far behind. Therefore, when leadership in the home is guided by the righteous Word of God, all that it touches is strengthened. Much speculation has been made about who King Lemuel and his mother were in Proverbs 31. Many scholars believe him to have been Solomon, and his mother would naturally have been Bathsheba. The mother in this chapter was burdened with a desire to see her son choose a wise path. For this wise mother, her son’s footsteps would have been to follow all that God would have for him to do. If this mother was

Bathsheba, she would certainly not have wanted Solomon to repeat the mistakes she and David had made. However, whether Lemuel is actually Solomon, or another man with a deeply concerned mother—we can still learn her message today.

The woman spoken of in this passage had a heart filled with virtue. The Hebrew word in this text meant more than purity; it actually carried a meaning that she was “**strong in all moral qualities.**”¹ She has been known as the virtuous woman through countless centuries across the globe. Proverbs 10:7 states, “The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.” Jezebel, Athaliah, and Delilah conjure up thoughts of evil and rottenness to the core. And yet, the names of Mary, Ruth, and Esther bring thoughts of wisdom and courage and virtue. Proverbs 22:1 declares, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, And a loving favour rather than silver and gold.” The virtuous woman gained her name from her virtuous actions. Because of her life, she had true, priceless value. As we go through this study, notice how her heart was translated into the work of her hands in so many areas.

How Rare She Was²

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10). She is compared to rubies, a perfect stone for a woman. The Ruby is the most valuable member of the corundum family, of which all other colors, except red, are referred to as sapphires. Most rubies have been heated to clarify the stones and improve the color. According to one source, large, gem-quality rubies can be more valuable than comparably sized diamonds.³ It is a hard and tough stone, which makes it a superb jewelry stone. What a wonderful comparison for the worthy woman! She is a most valuable member of her family; she

is tough and can withstand great pressure. She has been tried by fire, found stronger and even more beautiful. At the time of this writing, the Israelite nation was witnessing the lavish beauty of the temple, and the kingdom of Solomon is amassing great riches. To declare a woman as more valuable than rubies would certainly be an asset any man would desire to possess. J. Paul Getty (1892-1976) said, "I'd trade my fortune for just one happy marriage."

How Restful She Was

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:11-12). Any husband blessed to have a virtuous woman would never have to worry about what his wife was up to. There would be no mischief in her life, and, as such, his life would be spent in peace and not worry. Proverbs 12:4 gives a good contrast between a virtuous wife and a shameful wife: "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones." Can we say that we are bringing peace to our husband's life? Or are we responsible for worry that burns in his heart?

If you are not married, you can still possess the qualities of the virtuous woman in many aspects of your life. It is a good idea to plan now to be a worthy woman. These qualities do not just happen, they have to be worked on. Should you never marry, these attributes still can be translated into your life and bring joy to those around you.

Consider a few notorious women of the Bible: Delilah and Gomer. Delilah brought great pain into Samson's life. Judges 16:16 details her nature with him: "And it came to pass, when she **pressed** him **daily** with her words, and **urged** him, so that his soul was **vexed unto death**" (emp. mine throughout, TC). He finally told her where his great strength lay, and his downfall soon followed. Another man

of God, Hosea, lived with the pain and knowledge that his wife continually committed adultery. Hear his pain in Hosea 2:5-6 as he describes his wife Gomer:

For their mother hath **played the harlot**: she that conceived them **hath done shamefully**: for she said, **I will go after my lovers**, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

Hosea certainly could not trust in his wife.

What a joy it would be if all of our husbands had the same desire as Winston Churchill. He once attended a formal banquet in London, and a number of dignitaries and celebrities were present. The question was asked, “If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?” Everyone was curious as to what Churchill would say. When it was his turn the old man stood and gave a classic answer. “**If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be**”—he paused to take his wife’s hand—“**Lady Churchill’s second husband.**”⁴ He must have had great rest and peace with her as his wife.

How Resourceful She Is

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens (Prov. 31:13-15).

What is it that is keeping us busy in our lives? Are we like the virtuous woman? Are we busy caring for our homes with a “willing” heart? Or are we so stressed out with all the different directions that are pulling each one of us? No matter what is occurring in our lives, our families should feel that they are our priority. This is very difficult

in today's society. We spend much of our days rushing here and rushing there—and our homes suffer the personal attention that is required to run a home. In each of our lives, there will be times when we have no choice about the things that will fill our days. In my own personal life, it has been a bit stressful as I try to complete a degree in K-8 education, care for a sick grandmother in another town, work a job, and try to provide some semblance of a peaceful home environment. I have had to let some things go in order to maintain sanity!

As you have listened to the verses detail the virtuous woman's day, does it sound like she could easily find herself stressed out? Absolutely! The key is that her heart is willing. She is not resentful at the continual work and lack of rest; she is at peace with this, and each task is done lovingly and cheerfully. We all have duties and jobs that only we can fulfill in our homes. How are we accomplishing them? Are we filled with anger and resentment, or do we feel blessed that we have children that need us, and a husband that cannot get along without our fashion sense? Many women would trade the garb of widowhood and/or the empty nest for the chance to give again to those that she loved who are gone.

How Rich And Responsive She Is

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy...She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant (Prov. 31:16-20; Prov. 31:24).

Each of us has a specific talent that is uniquely our own. Some are blessed with more than one! This woman

had a business sense that translated into knowledge of real estate, gardening, sewing, and selling. Each of these is a daunting task, and yet she plunges in with courage and wisdom. Her family is blessed by the fruit of her hands. Her gains are not hoarded; she is ready and willing to share with the poor and needy of her community. Her heart truly is kind! She is an Old Testament Dorcas!

What talent do you possess? Can you sew? If so, have you considered putting your talent to use and making bears for abused children for the police to have available to pass out? What about that child—the child whose parents have fallen on hard times—who could use a few more dresses to wear?

I remember, as a young teenager, that my Dad was without a job. Two families in the church paid our house note for an entire year! We also had an elder who sewed (yes, the man—not the wife!), and he made my Mom some simple dresses for her to be able to go on job interviews. Another family provided most of our grocery needs. This wife was so frugal a shopper that she was able to purchase mass quantities of food. Her husband built her a pantry in their basement, and it was stocked with the abundance of her shopping savvy for families just like mine who needed the benevolence. You may be thinking that these people must have been wealthy! They were just average, middle-class people who had a willing heart and a desire to be ready to serve. What is your talent? What can you give of yourself, or your means, to those around you? By so doing you would be a tremendous blessing to your family and people in need.

How Ready And Respected She Is

She is not afraid of the snow for her household:
for all her household are clothed with scarlet.
She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her

clothing is silk and purple...She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness (Prov. 31:21-22; Prov. 31:27).

Jerusalem has cold winters, even today. John Phillips, in his commentary on Proverbs, states: "Two winters out of three, snow can be expected in Jerusalem. From time to time up to seventeen inches of snow can fall and it can linger in the hollows and shadows for two or three weeks."⁵ The worthy woman provided the best attire to get her family through a cold spell. Is this verse merely teaching us that we need to be sure that we have the correct clothing for the temperature for our families? No! It is showing that the virtuous woman had a readiness of mind which led her to be prepared to meet the varying needs that her family may encounter.

I drive a Ford Taurus that has a faulty gas tank that will not allow the ignition to start if the tank gets below $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tank. If I balk at the idea of getting gas, simply because I know that there are still several gallons of gas in my car, I will find myself stranded on the side of the road every time my tank reaches the $\frac{1}{4}$ mark. It would be foolish of me to ignore the needs of my tank, and time-consuming to always run out of gas!

Organization is often a dirty word, but shouldn't we try to have a plan and work the plan so that things run smoothly in our homes? A Chinese proverb wisely declares that one should "Dig a well **before** you are thirsty!" The home that has a prepared woman in it runs smoothly, and everyone in it feels a great deal more peace than the home that is constantly running out of supplies.

The worthy woman is also respected for the way in which she is dressed. She is covered in tapestry, silk, and purple. She takes care to be concerned with her appearance, her modesty, her tastefulness, and also what her clothing says about her character. What does our

clothing say about our character? Does the world find it hard to distinguish between what our clothes say about our values and what we profess to be? Model a Christian example in your home of a godly woman. A woman who is not afraid to declare God's fashion for herself will choose to be modestly and decently attired. Proverbs is filled with verses about the evil woman, and her dress and demeanor are part of what make her one to be avoided.

How Respected Her Husband Is

“Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land” (Prov. 31:23). If you are already married, you are in a bond that you have vowed to remain in and, as such, your husband is all yours, for life! Whatever qualities and attributes he possesses—these are the ones that you can work with to help him attain the godly characteristics that God would have him attain. Are you capitalizing on these traits? Or do you constantly nag and whine about the faults that he possesses? A virtuous woman looks to the ways of her husband and helps him to be the righteous and faithful worker that God has planned him to be. Do those around you praise your husband for the work he does in the church? If not, is this something that you can change? Can you encourage your husband to study and become a servant to the needs of the church? Do you see your husband as a future deacon or elder in the church? Do you do what you can do to be a helpmeet to him in these areas? Are you hospitable, submissive, kindhearted, and giving to the church and your family?

If you are not married, are you looking for a man with godly traits? Notice that, in this verse, it is his **wisdom** that is praised in the gates, not his looks or money. Girls, please look for a man that will help you get to heaven, not one that will hinder your path, placing weeds and briar

patches in your way. He may have the looks of a Greek Adonis with a heart of stone. Choose a man that has a heart molded after God. Look to his inward traits, and see the man inside the heart. It is a virtuous heart that will provide you with true happiness—not his looks (these fade with time), not his finances (markets crash in a heartbeat), and not his professional career (layoffs occur across the board). Remember, if you are blessed to have children, his code of ethics will be what he draws from to help raise these children. Don't trust your precious little ones to anyone less than a godly man.

How Right She Is...

“Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness” (Prov. 31:25-26). She has a strong and honest character. This is readily seen in how she lives her life and the speech that comes out of her mouth. Her words are filled with kindness and wisdom. She is known for honey and not sour lemons! Consider the following verses in Psalms and Proverbs:

Seven times a day do I **praise thee** because of thy righteous judgments (Psm. 119:164).

My **tongue shall speak of thy word**: for all thy commandments are righteousness (Psm. 119:172).

For there is not **a word in my tongue**, but, lo, O LORD, **thou knowest it altogether** (Psm. 139:4).

A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and **a word spoken in due season**, how good is it! (Prov. 15:23).

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver (Prov. 25:11).

Is your tongue constantly getting you in trouble with gossip, lying, or generally unkind words? Do you strive to make people smile with the thoughts that are conveyed in your words? Or do your words make people either sin, or frown—in disbelief that you uttered that statement? Do your words let the Son of God shine forth, or is He hidden behind hurtful, sinful utterances? The virtuous woman has the law of kindness in her words.

How Rewarded She Is

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates (Prov. 31:28-31).

Abraham Lincoln stated, “All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.” Do your children actively praise you? The virtuous woman’s children “**arise**” and call her blessed. What a blessing for a godly woman to have children praise her for her qualities and efforts that went into years of effort on her part. **Barnes’ Commentary** states:

Her children are well bred; they rise up and pay due respect. They are taught the fear of the Lord, and obedience to his testimonies; therefore they call her blessed. So they are of a decent, orderly, respectable, religious behavior. Her husband is so satisfied with her conduct toward himself, his household, his business, and their children, that he praiseth her. He shows himself sensible of her excellence, and encourages her, in her work, by the commendations he bestows.⁶

Children must be taught to praise God by a “godly” woman. When a child learns the beautiful nature of God, and then witnesses this nature in his mother, he cannot help but praise her. How blessed are the children of a virtuous woman!

Truly the book of Proverbs ends with a beautiful sentiment:

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates (Prov. 31:29-31).

The Modern Virtuous Woman

The virtuous woman had a loving, wise heart that translated into many acts of kindness with her hands. This woman's name says it all. She is full of moral strength and character. In today's modern world, with sin seemingly running rampant and unchecked, the church and her families truly need virtuous women to stand up, and be living beacons—declaring the truth of God's Word in their lives. One cannot watch the news without seeing acts of murder, rape, robbery, gambling, sex, and many other sinful deeds splashed across our TV screens.

It is easy to say the sin is out there, as we wave our hands at the world, and yet fail to see the sin in our own lives and infiltrating into the church. Do you find yourself standing firm when it comes to the doctrines of baptism and instrumental music, and yet faltering in your steadfastness when your children want to go to the prom, or to the beach in skimpy attire, or to a movie of ill report? After all, what could be wrong with dressing up and having a little fun with your friends? Having a picture made is harmless, isn't it? If I don't wear the latest fashion—low risers, belly-bearing shirts, leg-revealing skirts, and skintight clothing—then I'll be looked upon as weird. No one will listen to me anymore. That cannot possibly be good for my influence in the church. After all, my friends are good people, and, if I am going to be able to reach them, they have to feel at ease with me. I just won't

participate in any of the big sins—denominationalism, murder, or adultery.

As women striving to be like the virtuous woman, and Christ-like in all that we do, we do not need to turn a blind eye to the sins and enticements of the world. We need to recognize it in all its ugly, painful, reality. Especially as women of homes **with children in them**—we need to guard these precious souls from the sins of this world. I would like to quote from an article my husband recently wrote:

Through modern television programming, Satan's henchmen (TV producers, scriptwriters, etc.) constantly assault and bombard the very foundations of our faith. The airwaves are full of "electronic visions of a world so violent, sensual and narcotic that childhood itself appears to be under siege" (**U. S. News and World Report**). Analyst and columnist Michael Novak wrote, "Our own public moral culture formed preeminently by television, cinema and music is a disgrace to the human race." Even the **Ladies Home Journal** published an article entitled "Living In Truly Tasteless Times," in which the author asserted: "the American people appear to be unshockable now, desensitized even to genuine brutality—not to mention simple civility—and possessed of an insatiable appetite for whatever might once have been thought unsavory, crude, crass and even decadent...our popular culture is becoming flashier, trashier, more vulgar and exploitive."⁷

This has happened slowly over time, and we as a nation became desensitized to what the media was putting out in front of our eyes. As Christian women, we need not only to turn away from it, but take others with us also.

What kind of movies do you go see? Would you be completely comfortable if an elder and his wife tagged along with you? If I wouldn't want an elder, or my Lord, to

view what I watch, then I need to realize that I should not view it either! As mothers, please be concerned with what your children are watching. The old adage “Garbage in, Garbage out!” is so true. Those of you who have access to the internet, put the site “www.screenit.com” into your list of favorite websites. When your child says he wants to go see **American Pie** and you don’t have a clue what that is about, check it out. This site will tell you every objectionable scene, crude word, and a basic story plot. You will find yourself appalled at what the movies have become! Be industrious and diligent like the virtuous woman to guard your children’s souls in what they watch.

What about the music industry? A song that is sweeping through the country and rock stations is “Picture” by Kid Rock and Sheryl Crow. The lyrics contain cursing, condone multiple sex partners, and mention cocaine and whiskey. It is sung as a duet with beautiful harmony, and most people are not even listening to the actual words. Again, please be aware of the songs that you and your children are listening to. Words teach a message, and many of the songs today will lead your children far from the paths of righteousness.

If your children have access to a computer, please do not give them easy access to the internet. I know of a child that has full and unsupervised access to the internet at any time of day with his parents’ blessing. He is addicted to pornography. I do not know of a time in society when this particular sin has been so easy to commit. Even seemingly harmless internet searches may bring up ungodly sites and pictures. Please put a password on your computer for your child’s protection.

To close this lesson out, I want to discuss the qualities of the virtuous woman that gave her strength to be the woman God had in mind. Earlier I mentioned that her righteous heart translated into willing hands of work.

The first quality is her **venerate** fear of the Lord. **Webster's Dictionary** defines "venerate" as "to regard with reverential respect or with admiring deference, to honor (as an icon or a relic) with a ritual act of devotion, to revere."⁸ It is certainly true that the underlying strength of the worthy woman is her respect and reverence to the Lord. Proverbs 9:10 tells us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." If you seek wisdom, turn to the ways of the virtuous woman and respect the Lord. We also learn that "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life" (Prov. 22:4). The worthy woman was filled with riches and honour and life. Finally, it was her goal to pass it onto her children: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD" (Psm. 34:11). May we each have a child in our life to whom we may pass on the fear of the Lord.

Closely connected to her reverence of her Lord is her **virtuous** character. We have spent the chapter detailing the worthy aspects of her beautiful life. In comparison, what is in each of our lives that is hindering us from living pure, moral, upright lives? We must be willing to sacrifice the things that stand in our way from attaining this high prize. A verse we are all familiar with, Philippians 4:8, states:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any **virtue**, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

2 Peter 1:3 teaches us that God has called us to be virtuous: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

In this modern day, let it be said that we are hearing the call and making ourselves virtuous women worthy of our God.

Again, the virtuous woman was **valued** by her husband. Unfortunately, there are too many women who are demeaned and beat down by their husbands. It is a sign of a virtuous man who would help create the qualities of a virtuous woman in his mate. Are you valued by your husbands? If you are, thank him for the joy that he brings to your life and the encouragement he gives you. If you are not, make yourself invaluable to him in a cheerful and pleasing way. Kill him with kindness, and gently teach him what an asset you are in his life. Let your hands be ever ready to render to your husband aid and gentleness. Let all that you do be seasoned with love and a spirit of genuine peace. Even though you may be burdened with “much to do,” find in yourself a pleasant attitude, and try not to complain throughout the day. Let’s make ourselves valuable to our husbands as fine, polished rubies.

She also possessed a **vision** for her family. In Psalm 144:11-12, it states:

Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.

What vision do you possess for your children? Do you consume your time planning what they will be when they grow up, or do you plan what they will become for the Lord? There is a vast difference. Joshua stated, “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Notice the language of that statement—it is not a wishful desire. It is a foregone conclusion that his home **will** serve the Lord. Have you decided whom your home will serve? What is your vision?

The worthy woman had a **voice** of love. Her children called her blessed, and her husband praised her. She does not sound like the contentious woman of Proverbs or the harlot either, for that matter. She was praised by her family. A mother and wife worthy of this kind of admiration has words as sweet as honey for her family. However, her voice would be heard speaking words of admonition also, for that is the greatest form of love. Do you have a voice of love? Or is your voice too soft to be heard? The worthy woman had strength and courage in her character. Her voice was strong and sure, and her words would be backed with the richness of the words found in the pages of the Bible. In this modern world, we are taught that love is gentle and kind: it does not speak harsh words of correction. However, the virtuous woman must have admonished her children in the right paths to tread, or they would not have recognized her as worthy of praise—as she humbly walked with her Lord.

She was truly **viable** in her home. Unfortunately, some mothers are abusive and neglectful in their homes. Not so the worthy woman! She was alive, and her presence filled every room. Her home was her priority—her children, her husband, and the care that they needed. What are you devoting your life to? Is it a career? Or a hobby? Or just plain neglect? Are you alive and well in your home? Do you have your priorities right like the worthy woman?

Finally, what is your **view of eternity**? Do you have plans to reach heaven? Are your feet firmly planted on the path that will lead you there? James teaches us that our life is a vapor and before long it vanishes away (James 4:13ff). How true that statement is! In the daily stresses and pressures that we face, we need to be like Stephen in Acts 7:55 when he “looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” Do we see heaven in our future? If not, it is not

too late to make heaven your goal and make your life right with God. Make sure that you possess a view of eternity like the virtuous woman.

A dear Christian woman, Louise Cox, who possessed the qualities of a virtuous woman, wrote this poem. She has since received her reward in Heaven.

Life's Goal

What is the goal in life I seek?
 Whatever do I call my aim?
 Could it be wealth? Or maybe pow'r?
 Or is it earthly fame?

May **these** my goals forever be,
 To **live**, to **love**, to **leave**
 (And ne'er by tho't, or word, or deed
 Give others cause to grieve).

For one to **live** for **Christ**
 Is to claim a wealth untold
 That can ne'er be measured by
 One's silver or one's gold.

If I can truly **love** mankind
 'Twill lie within my pow'r
 To share with all mankind
 Its finest or its darkest hour.

And if I **leave** the world some better
 Because I walked this way,
 "Twas good that she has been here,"
 Is all that folks need say.

For if I seek these special goals
Live, love, leave—these three,
 Then I shall surely claim Christ's promise
 That I should live abundantly.

Endnotes

1 John Phillips, **Exploring Proverbs**, Volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), p. 594.

2 The outline used in this study comes from the source cited above.

3 <http://www.gemsociety.org>

4 R. Kent Hughes, **Ephesians: The Mystery Of The Body Of Christ** (Bible Illustrator for Windows, All-in-one 3.0), p. 189.

5 Phillips, p. 600.

6 From Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, 1996).

7 B. J. Clarke, "Hedonism," **Worldliness**, ed. Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL: Bellview church of Christ, 1999), p.62.

8 (<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=venerate>)



About The Author

Native of Georgia. Married to B.J. Clarke, 3 children. Attended Freed Hardeman College. Presently attending Crichton College pursuing K-8 teacher certification. Speaker on several ladies' days each year. Blessed to work with the Southaven church of Christ, Southaven, MS, since 1991.

A decorative border consisting of a thick black outer frame and a thin black inner frame, both with inward-pointing corners.

Subject And Scripture Indexes

Subject Index

A

Aaron, 22, 46, 534

Abaddon, 545

Abel, 347, 436, 539, 603-604

Abigail, 415, 504, 521

Abortion, 454, 533

About Moderate Social Drinking, 529

Abraham, 113, 174, 359, 368, 395, 572, 617, 622, 664, 684

Addiction, 380, 410, 511, 519

Adjuration, 489, 495

Adultery, 56, 132, 147, 185, 194, 251, 375-379, 381, 383-387, 389-390, 392-394, 396-397, 400, 402, **405-406**, 408, 410, 413, 417, 420-421, 423, 517, 598, 657, 678, 686

Agrippa II, 663

Agur, 12, 40, 53-56, 593-600

Ahab, 277, 415

AIDS, 95, 380-381

Alcohol, 7, 30, 56, 95, 227, 255, 258, 410, 512-513, 515-519, 521-522, 524, 526-527

Allah, 621-622

Amalekites, 265-266, 436, 439

Amenemope, 32-37, 40-43, 77

Ancient Near East, 19, 30-31, 41

Ancient Orient And Old Testament, 78

Angels, 114, 157, 263, 301, 609, 628
Anger, 11, 30, 35, 132, 150-151, 171, 190-191, 195, 215, 311-312, 387, 429, 441-442, 446-460, 477, 489, **503**, 668, 679
Antithetic parallelism, 60, 602
Apocrypha, 44, 46, 78
Apostasy, 52, 98, 142, 207, 369
Asaph, 323
Augustine, 263, 446

B

Baal, 231
Babylon, 440, 556
Babylonian wisdom class, 30
Baptism, 98, 685
Bathsheba, 56, 377, 396, 422, 521, 621-623, 675-676
Beatitudes, 192, 462, 614
Belshazzar, 538, 571-572
Bernice, 662-664
Bible And Social Drinking, 527-528
Building An Affair-Proof Marriage, 423

C

Caesar, 566, 621
Cain, 347, 436-437, 539-540, 603-605, 610
Calamity, 93, 114-115, 188, 232, 235, 349, 356, 365, 438, 566, 606, 608-609
Case of Hebrew parallelism, 524
Characteristics Of A Good Parent, 200
Chastening of the Lord, 102, 216, 228, 589
Chlamydia Infections Rising, 420
Church Losing 'Her' Young Folk, 222, 240
City limits of Jerusalem, 624
College Drinking, 517
Contentious woman of Proverbs, 690
Contentment, 109, 134, 255-256, 394, 429, 464, 469, 496, 597, 637-638
Correction, 73, 76, 121, 124, 203, 215-216, 228, 305, 308, 310, 383, 388, 421, 551, 588-589, 690
Covetousness, 39, 112, 139, 249, 503, 560, 666

D

David's adultery, 396, 402
David's throne, 618, 620, 625
Death, 39, 45, 61, 68-69, 95, 97, 99, 108-110, 119, 121, 137, 150, 155, 168, 171, 185, 205, 236-237, 248, **251-253**, 267, 271, 286, 288, 306, 326, 337-338, 344, 358-359, 367, 373, 377, 381, 383, 386-388, 393, 403, **409**, 412, 432, 448, 484, 487, 501, 507, 518, 521, 523, 532, 538, 545, 584, 604-606,

608, 610-611, 613, **617**, 621, 627, 642, 662, 667, 670, 677
Deceit, 39, 250, 307, 336, 372, 402, 437-439, 465, 483, 486, 493, 536, 576
Delilah, 388, 391, 676-677
Devil, 17, 87, 108, 160, 191, 197, 199, 232, 236, 263, 276, 281, 293, 343-344, 379, 398, 407, 438, 532, **609**, 650
Discipline, 23, 73, 75-76, 155, 198, 201, 203-205, 211-212, 214-217, 275, 542, 556, 588-589
Discretion, 23, 74, 95-96, 229-230, 244, 310, 404, 409, 574
Disease, 121, 251, 253, 381, 387-388, 393, 406, 420-421, 471, 513, 517, 641, 660-661, 670, 673
Disease Control, 420-421
Dishonesty, 166, 246, 250, 282, 324, 481-483, 485-486, 488-489, 491-493, 507, 536
Divers weights, 482, 536
Do's And Don'ts Regarding Our Dress, 652
Does The Bible Recommend Drinking Alcoholic Beverages, 528
Dome of the Rock, 619
Dorcias, 642, 680
Drunkard's Looking Glass, 513

E

Edom, 31, 441
Egypt, 30-31, 34, 40, 45, 85, 233, 264, 482, 536, 558
Emblematic parallelism, 60
Enchiridion, 446
Enemies, 9, 33, 84, 159-175, 224, 268, 316, 377, 389, 453, 549-551, 619
Envy, 27, 39, 113, 132, 149-151, 256-257, 452-453, 477, 564, 669
Epaphras, 581
Epaphroditus, 162
Esther, 44, 81, 637, 654, 657, 676
Evil men, 60, 127, 245-247, 250-251, 255-257, 341, 467, 564, 634
Ezekiel, 81, 334, 508
Ezra, 196, 368, 657
Ezrahite, 34, 85

F

Fashion designers, 652
Favor of the Lord, 179, 193, 355, 359
Fear of the Lord, 8-9, 17, 25-27, 44, 46, 52, 55, 57, 59-60, 64, 68, 75-76, 89, 92-93, 99-116, 120, 125, **133**, 266, 274-275, 304, 329, 447, 476, 635, 645, 684, 688
Festus, 662-663
Figurative language of the Hebrew writers, 66
Folly, 22, 24, 58-59, 61, 64, 67-68, 70, 77, 91-93, 106, 121, 123-124, 126, 204, 254, 276, 285-286, **303-304**, 306-310, 313-314, 316-317, 324, 327,

350-351, 364, 376, 378, 393, 403, 440, 451, 455, 504, 527, **609**, 660, 662-663, 669

Foolish Woman, 13, 67, 91, 95, 403, 659-660, 662, 664-665, 668, 670-672

Fools, 22, 25, 39, 75-76, 91, 93, 125-126, 133, 247, 254, 266, 304, 306-313, 315, 317, 330, 388, 390, 405, **426**, 431, 451, 454, 476, 533, 548, 596, 604, 608, 668-669

Fornication, 39, 184-185, 194, 254, 375-376, 378-379, 383, 406, 412, 419, 517

Fruit of the Spirit, 109, 337, 456

G

Goal of Proverbs, 447

God's omnipresence, 545

God's omniscience, 544-545

Golden Rule, 144, 170-171

Gomer, 677-678

Gomorrah, 114, 148, 161

Good parents, 201, 405

Good Samaritan, 144, 466

Gossip, 167, 170, 327, 338-340, 443-444, 684

Greek, 45, 47, 53, 71, 79, 118, 129, 210-211, 352, 419, 421, 471, 498, 517, 519, 526, 621, 670, 683

Guilt, 17, 109, 276, 383-384, 429, 500

H

Haters of God, 39

Heart, 17, 50, 103, 115, 126, 155-156, 204-205, 216, 245-246, 328, 379, 427, 429-431, 437, 465-471, 476, **488**, 507, 538, 549, 562, 570-571, 573, 575-576, 586-588, 640, 645, 653, 655, 660-661, 669-670, 673, 675, **677**, 683

Heaven, 38, 55, 83, 87-89, 100-101, 104, 107-108, 112-113, 121, 125, 158, 161, 168-169, 173-174, 178, **181**, 199, 213, 225, 233, 236-237, 240, 243, 246, 254, 258, 263, 267-269, 275, 278, 298, 330, 333, 335, **338**, 343-344, 348, 350, 352, 369, 372, 422, 428, 432, 471, 477, 501, 525, 531, 549, 562, 575, 579, 585, **595-596**, 611, 613, 618, 620, 623-626, 628, 636, 643, 645, 672, 682, 690-691

Hebrew, 22, 24, 26, 30-31, 38, 40-44, 46, 56, 59, 62, 65-66, 72, 74, 81, 87, 128-129, 132, 145, 180, 185, **188**, 190, 201-203, 206, 352, 393, 397, 419, 421, 492, 497, 515, 522-524, 670, 676

Hebrew parallelism, 523-524

Hedonism, 692

Hezekiah, 53, 57, 61, 264

HIV-positive, 382

Hoody Sapperticker, 280, 283, 301

I

Immorality, 198, 362, 379-380, 386, 517, 544, 565
Isaac, 195, 368, 414, 617
Israel, 29-30, 32, 38, 44-46, 50, 53, 56-57, 61-64, 69, 83, 85, 103, 123, 133, 142, 148-149, 152, 163, 183, **226**, 229, 242, 266, 270, 277, 286, 306, 334, 377, 385, 430, 436, 485, 496, 530, 542, 549, 558, 561, 569, **573-574**, 578, 612, 617-618, 620, 624, 626, 629, 664

J

Jakeh, 40, 54, 595
Jealousy, 149-151, 386, 453, 534
Jedidiah, 54, 621
Jehovah, 66, 84, 94, 101, 103, 105, 107-113, 161-162, 174, 180, 413, 416, 437,
Jehovah's Witness doctrine, 628
Jerusalem, 47, 50, 53, 146, 202-203, 229, 366, 462, 571, 619-620, 624, 630, 663, 667, 681
Jewish canonical Scriptures, 47
Jezebel, 396, 415, 676
Jonah's anger, 448, 453
Joseph, 30, 63, 162, 224, 259, 357, 368, 374, 395, 407-408, 416, 419, 524, 527
Judah, 53, 61, 123, 229, 264, 617
Judaism, 47, 142, 463
Judas, 573, 583, 606
Justice, 45, 61, 73, 92, 133-135, 154-155, 161, 371, 467, 481, 484, 486-487, 489-491, 522, 539, 546-548, **554**, 559, 563, 574, 577

K

King Lemuel, 40, 53-55, 64, 141, 156, 675
Kingdom of God, 103, 109, 112, 228, 295, 387, 525, 580

L

Lady Churchill's second husband, 678
Laodiceans, 117-118
Law of Biogenesis, 601
Lazarus, 113, 149, 151, 162, 282, 366, 572
Lemuel, 40, 53-56, 64, 141, 156, 520-521, 565, 593, 675-676
Lessons About Drinking, 520
Liars, 437, 439, 532, 668
Living In Truly Tasteless Times, 686
Look At The Drunkard, 513

Love, 5-6, 18, 26, 49-50, 52, 56, 83, 93, 96-97, 100-104, 106-107, 109-110, 115, 117-119, 123, 129, 134, **137**, 139, 142-143, 147, 157, 159, 162, 164, 166, 168-171, 173-175, 182-183, 185-190, 192, 194, 196, **211-215**, 217, 224, 226-227, 231, 233, 248, 259, 265, 267-268, 273, 294, 307, 319, 325, 337-340, 342, **351-352**, 355, 386, 390-391, 397, 399, 401, 411, 413, 416, 422-423, 432, 437, 443, 452, 456, 465, 468, **473**, 475-476, 493, 497, 510, 535, 544, 558, 564-565, 582, 593, 598, 609-610, 633-636, 641-643, 646, 654, **661**, 663, 666-667, 673, 689-691
Lust, 39, 184, 233, 265, 351, 381, 386, 389, 391, 393, 398-399, 401, 404, 417-418, 422, 582, 651

M

Macedonia, 299, 498
Major Differences Between Solomon and Christ, 622
Manoah, 220
Medicine, 7, 117, 227, 421, 471, 517, 524
Mercy, 45, 84, 101, 107-108, 140-141, 143-144, 148, 161, 212, 226, 270-271, 276, 278, 322, 348, 352, **363**, 447, 465-466, 546, 558-559, 576, 578, 612, 618
Micaiah, 163
Miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, 107
Misery, 249, 388, 470, 512-513, 521, 524, 565, 576, 665
Mohammed, 621, 623
Molech, 50
Money, 12, 154, 163, 214, 248, 255, 281, 290-292, 351, 363, 386, 391, 400, 430, 476, 491-492, 496-510, **513**, 531, 563, 609, 611, 642, 666, 672, 682
Mormonism, 301
Moses, 47, 78, 83, 103, 151, 162, 231-233, 329, 366, 368, 370, 377, 489, 496, 507, 509, 534, 554, 558, **569**, 622, 624, 663
Mother of King Lemuel, 141
Murder, 39, 147, 198, 338-339, 388, 402, 436, 454, 533, 554, 603, 685-686

N

Nathan, 54, 163, 621
Nature of God, 93, 106, 161, 437, 684
Nature of Proverbs, 302
Nebuchadnezzar, 148, 440, 538, 556, 571
Nehemiah, 54, 76, 202, 368, 508, 627, 629, 657
Noah, 38, 161, 368, 617

O

Old Testament Dorcas, 680
Old Testament predictive prophecies, 623

Omniscience of God, 544-545

Onesimus, 581

Onesiphorus, 166

Othella Pierce, 4

P

Parenthood, 367, 533

Parents, 10, 19, 39, 46, 63, 70, 103, 133, 182, 185-186, 193, 196-240, 252, 254, 256, 259, 305, 316, 384, **401**, 405, 409, 422, 436, 506, 512-513, 556, 597, 622, 648, 652-653, 680, 687

Patience, 69, 148, 185, 282, 359, 456, 472, 474, 599, 634

Peace, 95-96, 106, 109, 136, 139, 172, 213, 226, 310, 327, 337, 342, 363, 383, 430, 433, 442, 452, 456, **464-465**, 469, 534-535, 550, 562, 566, 576, 598, 611, 614, 677-679, 681, 689

Pharaoh, 30, 50, 63, 233, 264, 558

Pharisees, 142, 151, 272, 575, 618, 659, 663

Philo of Alexandria, 45

Physical discipline, 217

Pilate, 149, 621

Planned Parenthood, 533

Pleasant words, 328, 433, 537, 540

Poetical style of the Orientals, 602

Potiphar's wife, 395, 397, 416

Poverty, 68, 124, 140, 255, 282-283, 287, 291, 294, 315, 365, 485, 494, 496-498, 500-501, 505, 513, 521, **524**, 563, 565, 664

Pride, 10, 68, 76, 92, 94, 101, 106, 117, 148, 154, 233, 262-279, 310, 312, 343-344, 351, 387, 401, 440, **477**, 537-538, 565, 582, 596-597, 599, 617

Priscilla, 174, 641

Profanity, 238, 636

Profile of Women Getting Abortions, 420

Proverbs concerning husbands, 179

Proverbs of the New Testament, 456

Providence of God, 355-357

Prudence, 23, 74, 92, 271

Purpose of Proverbs, 73

Q

Qoheleth, 46

Queen of England, 638

Queen of Sheba, 86, 499, 553

Queen of Persia, 657

R

Raising Your Kids, 236, 240

Rebuke, 23, 103, 117-119, 123, 129, 157, 163-164, 173, 217, 231, 308, 325, 366, 431, 493, 502, 505, 564

Rehoboam, 58, 127, 558, 560, 629
Reproof, 8-9, 93, 117-129, 214, 216-217, 230, 232, 304-305, 308-309, 325, 405, 551, 625
Riches, 16, 33, 84, 86, 96-97, 110, 112-113, 138, 180, 182, 209, 233, 241, 273-274, 283, 322-324, 356, **376**, 464, 484, 494, 497-503, 505-506, 509, 611, 613, 617-618, 645, 666, 676-677, 688
Righteous rulers, 563-564
Righteousness of God, 441, 610
Roman Catholic Bibles, 46
Roman government, 662

S

Samson, 195, 220, 388, 391, 419, 677
Samuel, 81, 145, 163, 207, 266, 368, 436, 504, 578, 621, 623
Sanballat, 76
Satan, 17, 27, 93, 104, 110-111, 134-135, 169, 173, 197, 200, 218, 232-233, 238, 263, 267, 269, 281, 293, **340-341**, 343-344, 347, 351, 401, 412, 426, 432, 436, 603, 621, 625, 628, 649, 686
Saul, 141, 168, 170, 265-266, 436-437, 439, 541, 578, 584, 626
Sayings of Jesus, 553
Sayings of Mohammed, 623
Scriptural discipline, 215
Self-Control, 45, 51, 109, 311, 455-456, 517, 668, 670
Self-deception, 274, 294
Sexual Purity, 258, 421
Sexual Suicide, 195
Shame, 17, 38, 118, 123-124, 129, 136, 152, 212, 217, 232, 235, 254, 256, 272-273, 278, 290, 298, 300, **310-311**, 377, 388, 393, 408, 429, 438, 472, 493, 516, 598, 606, 608-609, 626
Shimei, 584
Showing Mercy On The Poor, 465
Shunamite woman, 538
Silver Boxes, 673
Similarities Between Solomon and Christ, 40, 617
Sins of Sodom, 407
Slothful man of Proverbs, 297
Slothfulness, 285, 297
Social Drinking: Unjustified, 527
Sodom, 114, 148, 161, 407
Solid rock of the Word, 662
Solomon's famous wisdom, 19
Solomon's father, 54
Solomon's foreign wives, 627
Solomon's mother, 56
Solomon's name, 626
Solomon's pessimistic view, 55
Solomon's priority, 580

Solomon's reign, 53, 618
Solomon's son, 558, 627
Solomon's temple, 619, 624
Solomon's yoke, 627
Solomonic authorship, 53
Son of Belial, 416
Son of David, 133, 163, 530, 574, 617, 623
Son of God, 48, 168, 171, 267, 344, 449, 516, 617, 624, 684
Song Of Solomon, 318, 374, 399, 478, 616
STDs, 380-381
Strife, 128, 151-154, 187-190, 267, 271, 274-275, 311, 322, 330, 337-338, 444, 450-453, 458, 476-477, **534-535**, 599
Substance Abuse, 511
Synonymous parallelism, 60, 74, 602
Synthetic parallelism, 60

T

Talmud, 54, 56, 58, 523
Teaching of Amenemope, 37, 42, 77
Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses, 66
Temperance, 30, 455-456, 471, 634
Tobiah, 76
Trust, 21, 26-27, 55, 101, 105, 112-113, 126, 166, 195, 228, 258, 264-265, 274, 324, 372, 382, 387, 428, **444**, 466, 497, 499, 506-507, 509, 582, 604, 626, 629, 640, 671, 677-678, 683

V

Veiled lies of the Foolish Woman, 91
Vengeance, 115, 161, 174, 386, 477, 561, 605
Victorious Christian Living, 529

W

Wailing Wall, 462
Wealth, 28, 52, 59, 65, 68, 112, 220, 266, 282, 288, 291, 323, 359, 376, 385, 399, 483-484, 496-497, **502-503**, 505-506, 617-618, 642, 667, 691
Weep, 108, 150, 178, 277, 475, 505, 572, 584
Weeping prophet Jeremiah, 351
White-collar Wall Street, 70
Whoredom, 379, 389, 401, 492
Whoremongers, 187, 234, 390, 412, 417, 532
Wine In The Bible, 528
Winston Churchill, 678

Wisdom And Poetry Of The Old Testament, 76
Wisdom Literature And Psalms, 79
Wisdom literature of the Ancient Near East, 19
Wisdom of Egypt, 31, 34, 85
Wisdom of Solomon, 34, 44-45, 47-48, 65, 86, 553, 594, 616, 618
Wise Man's Features, 326
Wise Man's Fortune, 323
Wise Man's Future, 329
Woman, 4, 11, 13, 25, 39, 56-57, 60, 64-65, 67-68, 85, 90-91, 95, 111, 180, 183-184, 186-190, 194, **218-219**, 244, 250-251, 253, 290, 343, 375-376, 380, 383, 385, 389-390, 392-397, 399-403, 406-407, **411-412**, 417-418, 421-422, 450, 490, 502, 504, 508, 520, 538, 574, 598, 617, 623, 628, 631, 633, 636, **641-643**, 646, 648-649, 651-652, 654, 657, 659-665, 668, 670-672, 674-679, 681-682, 684-691
Woman With The Attire Of An Harlot, 13, 648-649
Women, 8, 39, 46, 50, 56-57, 62, 64-65, 67-68, 91, 117, 155, 162, 179-181, 183, 186, 189-190, 204, 224, **227**, 251, 255, 341, 375, 387, 392, 394, 396-397, 399, 402-403, 411, 414, 420, 444, 478, 516-517, 519, **522**, 527, 533, 565, 598, 618, 627-629, 634, 637, 639, 648, 650-651, 653-654, 656-657, 663-664, 667-668, **671-672**, 677, 679, 685-686, 689
Women of the Bible, 664, 677
Women of the Moabites, 50
World And Literature Of The Old Testament, 80
Worldliness, 139, 397, 692
Worship of God, 26, 105
Wrath, 38, 151, 191, 225, 257, 271, 311, 313, 327, 371, 387, 429, 441-442, 451-453, 455-458, 501, 504, **515**, 534, 560, 566, 596, 599, 607, 669
Wrath of God, 38, 596

Y

Year of Jubilee, 554

Z

Zebedee, 277, 531
Zechariah, 619
Zidonians, 50
Zophar, 162

Scripture Index

GENESIS

- Gen. 1:26-27**, 16, 38, 170, 399
Gen. 1:27, 411
Gen. 1:28-30, 19
Gen. 1:28-31, 17
Gen. 2:7, 436
Gen. 2:15, 19, 636
Gen. 2:15-25, 17
Gen. 2:16-17, 17, 105
Gen. 2:16, 412
Gen. 2:17, 604
Gen. 2:18, 411, 640
Gen. 2:24, 181, 183, 194
Gen. 3:1-6, 91
Gen. 3:1-7, 17
Gen. 3:4-6, 265
Gen. 3:5, 17
Gen. 3:6, 17, 321
Gen. 3:7-19, 17
Gen. 3:11-19, 105
Gen. 3:15, 343, 623
Gen. 3:16-24, 235
Gen. 4:3-7, 540
Gen. 4:7, 603, 610
Gen. 4:9, 436
Gen. 4:11-16, 605
Gen. 4:24, 420
Gen. 6:5, 105, 161, 257, 533
Gen. 9:4, 533
Gen. 9:5-6, 533
Gen. 11:1-9, 538
Gen. 12:14-15, 399
Gen. 13:8, 153
Gen. 18:19, 239
Gen. 24:16, 399
Gen. 24:65, 654
Gen. 25:34, 76
Gen. 26:7, 399
Gen. 26:8, 414
Gen. 26:25, 185
Gen. 29:17, 399
Gen. 29:20, 416
Gen. 33:5, 224
Gen. 38:13-17, 385
Gen. 38:14, 396
Gen. 39:6, 399
Gen. 39:7, 395
Gen. 39:9, 416
Gen. 39:10-12, 407
Gen. 39:12, 395, 397
Gen. 41:8, 30
Gen. 41:17-32, 30
Gen. 41:33, 30
Gen. 41:39, 30
Gen. 45:5-7, 356
Gen. 45:8, 63

Gen. 48:9, 224
Gen. 50:20, 356-357

LEVITICUS

Lev. 5:1, 489
Lev. 7:15, 398
Lev. 10:1-2, 235
Lev. 10:1-11, 105
Lev. 17:11, 533
Lev. 18:22, 155, 492
Lev. 19:3, 75
Lev. 19:15, 164
Lev. 19:18, 19
Lev. 19:35-36, 282, 482, 536
Lev. 20:10, 377
Lev. 23:22, 142
Lev. 25:10, 554
Lev. 25:35-37, 507
Lev. 26:28, 420

NUMBERS

Num. 5:12, 386
Num. 7:10-11, 202
Num. 7:84, 202
Num. 7:88, 202
Num. 16:3, 151
Num. 23:7, 50
Num. 24:15, 50
Num. 32:23, 370, 385-386

DEUTERONOMY

Deut. 1:17, 164
Deut. 1:29, 75
Deut. 4:15, 418
Deut. 5:16, 597
Deut. 6:1-9, 226
Deut. 6:2-5, 103
Deut. 6:4-5, 19
Deut. 6:4-9, 305, 467
Deut. 6:6-7, 237
Deut. 6:6-9, 83
Deut. 6:8-9, 404
Deut. 7:35-36, 492
Deut. 8:17-18, 496
Deut. 10:18, 37
Deut. 11:1, 105
Deut. 11:16, 407
Deut. 11:18-20, 671

Deut. 11:19-21, 83
Deut. 11:26-28, 370
Deut. 13:13, 336
Deut. 13:14, 154
Deut. 15:6-8, 507
Deut. 16:19, 490
Deut. 17:16-17, 51
Deut. 20:5, 202
Deut. 22:1-4, 143
Deut. 22:5, 492
Deut. 22:22, 377
Deut. 22:22-27, 155
Deut. 23:18, 492
Deut. 23:19-20, 507
Deut. 24:7, 155
Deut. 24:10-13, 507
Deut. 24:14, 141
Deut. 24:19-21, 286
Deut. 25:4, 137, 366, 569
Deut. 25:13-16, 282, 483
Deut. 26:12, 142
Deut. 28:12, 507
Deut. 30:11-19, 370
Deut. 32:46, 329
Deut. 33:27, 93

JOSHUA

Josh. 14:1-5, 573
Josh. 22:11, 152
Josh. 24:15, 231, 689

JUDGES

Judg. 5:7, 63
Judg. 13:12, 220
Judg. 13:24-25, 220
Judg. 16:1, 419
Judg. 16:16, 677
Judg. 21:25, 307

RUTH

Ruth 1:15 Naomi, 664
Ruth 1:16-18, 162
Ruth 2:1, 422
Ruth 3:2, 422
Ruth 4, 195

1 SAMUEL

1 Sam. 2:22, 398

1 Sam. 10:12, 49
1 Sam. 14:2, 63
1 Sam. 15:3-26, 105
1 Sam. 15:13-14, 436
1 Sam. 15:15, 265
1 Sam. 15:17-19, 266
1 Sam. 15:22, 578
1 Sam. 16:7, 399
1 Sam. 16:12, 399
1 Sam. 17:45, 270
1 Sam. 17:47, 270
1 Sam. 18:1-3, 162
1 Sam. 19:10, 584
1 Sam. 24:13, 49
1 Sam. 24:17, 170
1 Sam. 25:3, 415, 504
1 Sam. 25:14, 415
1 Sam. 25:19, 416
1 Sam. 25:23-31, 504
1 Sam. 25:25, 271, 416
1 Sam. 25:36, 416, 521
1 Sam. 25:37, 504
1 Sam. 25:38, 504

2 SAMUEL

2 Sam. 8:9-11, 458
2 Sam. 11:2-4, 419
2 Sam. 12:6, 420
2 Sam. 12:13-19, 57
2 Sam. 12:24, 56, 621
2 Sam. 12:25, 54
2 Sam. 13:1-14, 417
2 Sam. 13:3, 163
2 Sam. 16:5-13, 584
2 Sam. 19:16-23, 584
2 Sam. 22:28, 279

1 KINGS

1 Kings 1:41, 392
1 Kings 2:3, 629
1 Kings 2:12, 620
1 Kings 3:3-10, 435
1 Kings 3:5-15, 462
1 Kings 3:5-9, 84
1 Kings 3:9-10, 561
1 Kings 3:9-12, 33, 39
1 Kings 3:11-13, 84
1 Kings 3:12, 48, 50, 573

1 Kings 3:16-27, 618
1 Kings 3:16ff, 561
1 Kings 3:24-27, 85
1 Kings 3:24, 561
1 Kings 3:28, 75, 85, 618
1 Kings 4:29-32, 51, 86
1 Kings 4:29-34, 34, 39, 50, 57, 73

1 Kings 4:29ff, 618
1 Kings 4:30, 31, 48
1 Kings 4:32, 499
1 Kings 4:33, 19, 55
1 Kings 4:34, 86, 619
1 Kings 8:63, 202
1 Kings 9:6-9, 50
1 Kings 10:1, 86
1 Kings 10:1-10, 73
1 Kings 10:1-7, 499
1 Kings 10:3, 86
1 Kings 10:6-7, 86
1 Kings 10:7, 619
1 Kings 10:23-24, 48, 50
1 Kings 11:1-4, 376, 419
1 Kings 11:1-10, 51
1 Kings 11:1-13, 209
1 Kings 11:4, 209
1 Kings 11:41-43, 57
1 Kings 12:6-7, 558
1 Kings 14:21, 58
1 Kings 16:3, 274
1 Kings 18:21, 231
1 Kings 20:11, 277
1 Kings 21:7, 415
1 Kings 22:8, 163

2 KINGS

2 Kings 4:1-7, 537
2 Kings 4:8-26, 538
2 Kings 4:13, 638
2 Kings 9:24, 487
2 Kings 9:30, 396
2 Kings 18:21, 264

1 CHRONICLES

1 Chron. 29:23, 620

EZRA

Ezra 10:2-3, 196

NEHEMIAH

Neh. 1:9, 196
Neh. 4:4, 76
Neh. 5:3-13, 508
Neh. 8:5, 196
Neh. 8:8, 196
Neh. 8:12-18, 196
Neh. 11:7, 54
Neh. 12:27, 202
Neh. 13:1-3, 196
Neh. 13:26, 419, 629

ESTHER

Esth. 1:13, 31
Esth. 5:14, 585
Esth. 7:10, 585

JOB

Job 1:1, 329
Job 1:8, 111, 329
Job 1:21, 470
Job 1:22, 359
Job 2:3, 329
Job 2:11, 163
Job 5:2, 669
Job 5:16, 606
Job 8:3, 491
Job 9:20, 363
Job 11:7-10, 595
Job 12:13, 26, 44
Job 14:1, 111
Job 15:5, 488
Job 15:7-9, 595
Job 15:16, 487
Job 19:19, 163
Job 23:12, 404
Job 28:1-12, 99
Job 28:13-19, 99
Job 28:20, 89
Job 28:20-22, 99
Job 28:23, 89
Job 28:23-27, 99
Job 28:24-27, 67
Job 28:28, 25, 99, 404
Job 29:1, 50
Job 31:1, 397
Job 31:4, 416
Job 31:11, 375

Job 31:12, 384
Job 32:7, 22
Job 34:12, 491
Job 34:21, 416
Job 38:11, 419
Job 38:36, 17, 38
Job 38-41, 27

PSALMS

Psm. 1:1, 326, 407, 540, 634
Psm. 1:1-3, 105, 109, 320
Psm. 1:4-6, 320
Psm. 2:10-12, 107
Psm. 6:10, 160
Psm. 7:5, 160
Psm. 7:11, 449, 454
Psm. 9:3-6, 160
Psm. 10:4, 277
Psm. 14:1, 613, 661
Psm. 15:1, 486, 531
Psm. 15:2, 329
Psm. 15:2-5, 531
Psm. 15:4, 486
Psm. 19:1, 550
Psm. 19:14, 491
Psm. 23:4, 216
Psm. 30:5, 449
Psm. 34:11, 688
Psm. 37, 28, 112
Psm. 37:16, 112
Psm. 37:25, 356
Psm. 41:9, 583
Psm. 49:10, 599
Psm. 49:4, 50
Psm. 50:10-12, 363
Psm. 51:17, 278
Psm. 51:6, 38
Psm. 53, 21
Psm. 53:1, 661
Psm. 55:21, 422
Psm. 59:1, 174
Psm. 66:18, 540
Psm. 68:5, 37
Psm. 72, 51
Psm. 73, 21, 28, 323
Psm. 73:12, 323
Psm. 74:9, 128
Psm. 81:3, 422

- Psm. 82**, 21, 141
Psm. 82:3, 141
Psm. 84:11, 596
Psm. 85:10, 558
Psm. 89:14, 554
Psm. 90:1-2, 623
Psm. 90:2, 93, 242
Psm. 90:10, 373
Psm. 90:12, 111, 329
Psm. 91, 21, 175
Psm. 91:2, 175
Psm. 92: 1-4, 661
Psm. 92:5-6, 661
Psm. 101:3, 418
Psm. 104:24, 26
Psm. 106:16, 151
Psm. 111:10, 26, 635
Psm. 111:9, 636
Psm. 112, 21
Psm. 115:11, 27
Psm. 118:8-9, 466
Psm. 119:103, 586
Psm. 119:105, 635
Psm. 119:9, 404, 635
Psm. 119:10-11, 635
Psm. 119:11, 89, 237
Psm. 119:16, 237
Psm. 119:71, 359
Psm. 119:97, 635
Psm. 119:128, 635
Psm. 119:138, 635
Psm. 119:160, 72
Psm. 119:160-161, 635
Psm. 119:164, 683
Psm. 119:172, 213, 455, 610, 683
Psm. 120:2, 488
Psm. 122:1, 636
Psm. 125, 21
Psm. 127:3-5, 224, 316, 413
Psm. 128:3, 413
Psm. 131:2, 392
Psm. 133:1-3, 534
Psm. 139:4, 683
Psm. 144:11-12, 689
Psm. 147:5, 16
- PROVERBS**
Prov. 1:1, 40, 50, 53, 58, 73, 530
Prov. 1:1-3, 133
Prov. 1:1-5, 435
Prov. 1:1-6, 574
Prov. 1:1-7, 63
Prov. 1:1-9, 19
Prov. 1:2, 73
Prov. 1:2-3, 86
Prov. 1:3, 73, 491
Prov. 1:5, 18, 23, 325, 329
Prov. 1:5-9, 467
Prov. 1:7, 18, 22, 25-26, 51-52, 55, 59, 68, 75, 94, 105, 125, 133, 180, 243, 266, 304, 447, 645
Prov. 1:7-8, 405
Prov. 1:8, 133, 230
Prov. 1:8-9, 89
Prov. 1:9, 422
Prov. 1:10, 133, 244
Prov. 1:10-19, 59
Prov. 1:11-12, 248
Prov. 1:11-14, 248
Prov. 1:13, 248
Prov. 1:14, 248-249
Prov. 1:15, 245
Prov. 1:16, 71, 248
Prov. 1:16-19, 248
Prov. 1:17-18, 248
Prov. 1:19, 69, 248
Prov. 1:20-21, 90
Prov. 1:20-22, 65
Prov. 1:20-33, 65
Prov. 1:22-32, 93
Prov. 1:29, 27, 55
Prov. 1:31, 69
Prov. 1:31-32, 69
Prov. 1:33, 25, 95
Prov. 2:1-5, 19
Prov. 2:1-9, 89, 201
Prov. 2:5, 27, 55
Prov. 2:5-6, 44, 51
Prov. 2:6, 18, 21, 48, 59, 66, 89, 303
Prov. 2:7-8, 95
Prov. 2:7, 90
Prov. 2:8-9, 25
Prov. 2:9, 95, 134
Prov. 2:10, 95
Prov. 2:10-11, 244
Prov. 2:11-22, 95
Prov. 2:12, 244, 250
Prov. 2:12-19, 250
Prov. 2:13, 250

- Prov. 2:14**, 250
Prov. 2:15, 250
Prov. 2:16, 244, 250-251, 390, 393
Prov. 2:16-19, 59, 67
Prov. 2:17, 250, 390
Prov. 2:18, 388
Prov. 2:18-19, 250, 252-253
Prov. 2:19, 378
Prov. 2:20, 243
Prov. 2:20-22, 69
Prov. 2:21, 613
Prov. 2:21-22, 602
Prov. 2:22, 605
Prov. 3:1, 226, 230
Prov. 3:1-2, 25, 95
Prov. 3:1-3, 89
Prov. 3:1-4, 18, 226
Prov. 3:1-5, 25
Prov. 3:4, 25
Prov. 3:5, 23
Prov. 3:5-6, 466, 629
Prov. 3:5-6, 27, 51, 66, 73, 105, 594
Prov. 3:5-7, 264-265, 275
Prov. 3:5-12, 59, 228
Prov. 3:6, 133
Prov. 3:7, 27, 55, 71
Prov. 3:8, 466
Prov. 3:9-10, 502
Prov. 3:11-12, 71, 216-217
Prov. 3:12, 215, 589
Prov. 3:13, 95
Prov. 3:13-18, 59, 96, 464
Prov. 3:13-20, 65
Prov. 3:14-15, 88
Prov. 3:18, 96
Prov. 3:19, 26, 59, 67
Prov. 3:19-20, 92
Prov. 3:21, 23, 230
Prov. 3:21-26, 96, 229
Prov. 3:23-26, 69
Prov. 3:26, 59
Prov. 3:27, 395
Prov. 3:27-28, 139
Prov. 3:29, 135
Prov. 3:30, 152
Prov. 3:31, 256
Prov. 3:32, 530
Prov. 3:33, 69, 605, 611
Prov. 3:33-35, 69
Prov. 3:34, 71, 268
Prov. 3:35, 96, 331, 608, 613
Prov. 4:1, 23
Prov. 4:1-4, 446
Prov. 4:1-8, 83, 87
Prov. 4:3-4, 63-64
Prov. 4:4-7, 106
Prov. 4:5, 8, 84, 87, 331
Prov. 4:6, 95
Prov. 4:6-9, 96
Prov. 4:7, 84
Prov. 4:8-13, 369
Prov. 4:10-13, 229
Prov. 4:14, 407, 634
Prov. 4:14-15, 60, 245, 369
Prov. 4:14-19, 58-59
Prov. 4:16-17, 248
Prov. 4:18-19, 69
Prov. 4:18, 243
Prov. 4:19, 250
Prov. 4:20-27, 231, 245
Prov. 4:23, 245, 256, 538, 587, 599, 640, 645
Prov. 4:24, 245-246
Prov. 4:25, 245
Prov. 4:26, 245, 247
Prov. 4:27, 245
Prov. 5:1, 403
Prov. 5:1-2, 89
Prov. 5:3, 251, 393-394, 396
Prov. 5:4, 376, 383, 394
Prov. 5:4-5, 383
Prov. 5:5, 389
Prov. 5:6, 391, 416
Prov. 5:7, 403
Prov. 5:7-14, 204
Prov. 5:8, 406
Prov. 5:9, 376, 379, 383, 386
Prov. 5:10, 385
Prov. 5:11, 380
Prov. 5:12, 403
Prov. 5:12-13, 405
Prov. 5:13, 422
Prov. 5:14, 384
Prov. 5:15, 184, 411
Prov. 5:15-19, 179, 183, 184, 193

Scripture Index

- Prov. 5:16**, 413
Prov. 5:17, 185, 411
Prov. 5:18, 411, 414
Prov. 5:19, 185-186, 411
Prov. 5:20, 185
Prov. 5:20-21, 187
Prov. 5:21, 59, 69, 416, 544
Prov. 5:22, 69, 349, 379
Prov. 5:22-23, 378
Prov. 5:23, 350, 376
Prov. 6:1-5, 59, 508-509
Prov. 6:6, 598
Prov. 6:6-8, 18, 139, 300
Prov. 6:6-11, 59
Prov. 6:9-11, 285
Prov. 6:12, 437
Prov. 6:12-14, 336
Prov. 6:12-15, 59
Prov. 6:15, 349, 606
Prov. 6:16, 531
Prov. 6:16-19, 59, 61, 269, 337
Prov. 6:17, 326, 437
Prov. 6:18, 540
Prov. 6:19, 488
Prov. 6:20, 63, 230
Prov. 6:21-22, 226
Prov. 6:23, 205, 403
Prov. 6:23-35, 56, 59, 67
Prov. 6:24, 391, 393, 396, 407
Prov. 6:25, 395-396, 417
Prov. 6:26, 385-386, 391, 490
Prov. 6:27-28, 384
Prov. 6:29, 418
Prov. 6:30-33, 377
Prov. 6:31, 377
Prov. 6:32, 376, 384, 403, 489
Prov. 6:32-35, 253
Prov. 6:33, 376, 380, 383, 420
Prov. 6:34, 383
Prov. 6:34-35, 386
Prov. 7:1-3, 58, 89
Prov. 7:1-5, 404
Prov. 7:2, 403, 419
Prov. 7:5, 251, 393
Prov. 7:6-7, 390
Prov. 7:6-21, 403
Prov. 7:7, 403-404, 649
Prov. 7:7-8, 129
Prov. 7:8, 406
Prov. 7:9, 407, 422
Prov. 7:10, 391, 396, 649
Prov. 7:11, 392
Prov. 7:11-12, 392
Prov. 7:13, 396-397
Prov. 7:14, 398-399
Prov. 7:15, 393
Prov. 7:16, 399
Prov. 7:17, 397, 399
Prov. 7:18, 185, 391, 397
Prov. 7:19, 400
Prov. 7:20, 400, 422
Prov. 7:21, 393, 395, 399, 418
Prov. 7:22, 383
Prov. 7:22-23, 388
Prov. 7:24, 226
Prov. 7:25, 406
Prov. 7:26, 384, 388, 418
Prov. 7:27, 58
Prov. 8:1-3, 403
Prov. 8:1-4, 90
Prov. 8:1-9, 6, 65
Prov. 8:5-9, 92
Prov. 8:7, 535
Prov. 8:10-11, 88
Prov. 8:12-16, 92
Prov. 8:13, 55, 75, 94, 101, 266
Prov. 8:17-21, 97
Prov. 8:18, 65, 97
Prov. 8:19, 88
Prov. 8:20, 214
Prov. 8:21, 65
Prov. 8:22, 65-67
Prov. 8:22-23, 65
Prov. 8:22-31, 67, 92
Prov. 8:22-34, 59
Prov. 8:22-36, 38
Prov. 8:27-30, 67
Prov. 8:30, 65, 67
Prov. 8:32, 205
Prov. 8:32-36, 97
Prov. 8:35, 179
Prov. 8:36, 489
Prov. 9:1, 640
Prov. 9:1-6, 65, 90
Prov. 9:4, 74
Prov. 9:6, 93

- Prov. 9:7**, 123
Prov. 9:8, 123, 325
Prov. 9:9, 119, 325
Prov. 9:10, 17-18, 25, 51-52, 55, 60, 68, 75, 94, 105, 688
Prov. 9:10-11, 59
Prov. 9:11-12, 95
Prov. 9:13, 27, 392
Prov. 9:13-18, 59, 67, 91
Prov. 9:14, 395
Prov. 9:16, 74
Prov. 9:17, 67, 91, 393, 401
Prov. 10:1, 53, 68, 204, 214, 231, 331
Prov. 10:2, 356, 606, 610
Prov. 10:3, 69, 356, 606, 611
Prov. 10:4, 282
Prov. 10:5, 204, 290
Prov. 10:6, 349, 606, 611
Prov. 10:7, 606, 611
Prov. 10:8, 69, 124, 325
Prov. 10:9, 329, 370
Prov. 10:10, 315
Prov. 10:11, 426
Prov. 10:12, 71
Prov. 10:13-14, 431
Prov. 10:14, 75
Prov. 10:15, 505
Prov. 10:16, 356, 606, 610-611
Prov. 10:17, 119, 124
Prov. 10:19, 327
Prov. 10:20, 327, 427
Prov. 10:21, 75
Prov. 10:22, 611
Prov. 10:23, 307, 326
Prov. 10:24, 357, 607, 611
Prov. 10:25, 357, 607, 612
Prov. 10:26, 288
Prov. 10:27, 27, 55, 75, 358, 607, 612, 614
Prov. 10:28, 358, 607, 612
Prov. 10:29, 69, 361, 608, 612-613
Prov. 10:30, 358, 361, 605, 612
Prov. 10:31, 431
Prov. 10:32, 430
Prov. 11:1, 482-483, 536
Prov. 11:2, 273
Prov. 11:3, 369
Prov. 11:4, 501
Prov. 11:5-6, 369
Prov. 11:7, 358
Prov. 11:8, 362
Prov. 11:9, 443
Prov. 11:10-11, 362
Prov. 11:12, 136
Prov. 11:13, 60, 443
Prov. 11:14, 128
Prov. 11:15, 508-509
Prov. 11:16, 13, 502, 633
Prov. 11:17, 271
Prov. 11:18, 602
Prov. 11:18-19, 363
Prov. 11:19, 69, 608, 610
Prov. 11:20, 537
Prov. 11:21, 249, 605, 612
Prov. 11:22, 399
Prov. 11:23, 68, 370, 607
Prov. 11:24-26, 140
Prov. 11:27, 143
Prov. 11:28, 501
Prov. 11:28-29, 369
Prov. 11:29, 316, 324
Prov. 11:30, 327, 363
Prov. 11:31, 71, 363
Prov. 12:1, 119, 124, 129, 599
Prov. 12:2, 69, 179, 355, 358
Prov. 12:2-3, 367
Prov. 12:4, 640
Prov. 12:5, 370
Prov. 12:6, 428, 430
Prov. 12:7, 367, 607, 612
Prov. 12:8, 23, 330
Prov. 12:9, 263
Prov. 12:10, 366
Prov. 12:11, 291
Prov. 12:12, 341, 370
Prov. 12:13, 349, 367, 428
Prov. 12:14, 432
Prov. 12:15, 124, 205, 214, 306
Prov. 12:16, 311
Prov. 12:17, 437, 486
Prov. 12:18, 217, 326, 429
Prov. 12:19, 438, 492
Prov. 12:20, 465
Prov. 12:21, 359
Prov. 12:22, 437, 492, 537

Scripture Index

- Prov. 12:23**, 442
Prov. 12:24, 68, 283
Prov. 12:25, 429
Prov. 12:26, 205
Prov. 12:27, 284, 289
Prov. 12:28, 367, 610
Prov. 13:1, 119, 123, 204, 214, 231, 331
Prov. 13:2, 426
Prov. 13:3, 441
Prov. 13:4, 284, 289
Prov. 13:5, 370, 493
Prov. 13:5-6, 58
Prov. 13:6, 370
Prov. 13:7, 501
Prov. 13:8, 502, 505
Prov. 13:9, 255, 358, 607-608, 612
Prov. 13:10, 128, 271
Prov. 13:11, 282, 502, 505
Prov. 13:12, 465
Prov. 13:12-13, 58
Prov. 13:13, 124, 204
Prov. 13:14, 326, 613
Prov. 13:15, 349, 608, 613
Prov. 13:16, 309, 322
Prov. 13:17, 349
Prov. 13:18, 124, 204
Prov. 13:19, 307
Prov. 13:20, 68, 252, 254, 329, 331
Prov. 13:21, 58, 608, 612
Prov. 13:22, 364, 502
Prov. 13:23, 138, 484
Prov. 13:24, 204, 215, 217, 467
Prov. 13:25, 356
Prov. 14:1, 180, 636, 640, 659-661, 672
Prov. 14:2, 111, 115, 329, 369
Prov. 14:3, 76, 271, 310, 327, 440
Prov. 14:4, 569
Prov. 14:5, 486
Prov. 14:6, 126
Prov. 14:7, 250, 313
Prov. 14:8, 307
Prov. 14:9, 69, 307, 390
Prov. 14:10, 570
Prov. 14:11, 361, 607, 613
Prov. 14:12, 68, 205, 264, 306, 376, 466
Prov. 14:13, 571
Prov. 14:14, 69, 367, 614
Prov. 14:15, 74, 323
Prov. 14:15-17, 311
Prov. 14:16, 326
Prov. 14:17, 450-451, 455
Prov. 14:18, 324
Prov. 14:19, 368
Prov. 14:20-21, 140
Prov. 14:21, 465
Prov. 14:22, 143
Prov. 14:23, 291
Prov. 14:24, 323, 609, 613
Prov. 14:25, 439, 487
Prov. 14:26, 55, 111
Prov. 14:27, 27, 108-109
Prov. 14:28, 565
Prov. 14:29, 451, 455
Prov. 14:30, 149
Prov. 14:31, 140
Prov. 14:32, 358, 607, 611
Prov. 14:33, 328
Prov. 14:34, 362, 556, 567
Prov. 14:35, 324, 566
Prov. 15:1, 327, 429, 442, 458
Prov. 15:2, 327, 431, 669
Prov. 15:3, 61, 416, 544
Prov. 15:4, 427
Prov. 15:5, 76, 120, 124, 214, 230, 232, 304, 325
Prov. 15:6, 364, 499, 607, 611
Prov. 15:7, 327, 431
Prov. 15:8-9, 61, 346, 360, 537
Prov. 15:10, 124
Prov. 15:11, 61, 545
Prov. 15:12, 123
Prov. 15:13, 470
Prov. 15:14, 306, 328, 669
Prov. 15:15, 469
Prov. 15:16, 112, 500
Prov. 15:17, 139, 179, 187-188, 193
Prov. 15:18, 451
Prov. 15:19, 292
Prov. 15:20, 232, 331
Prov. 15:21, 94
Prov. 15:22, 128
Prov. 15:23, 328, 430, 683
Prov. 15:24, 330, 613
Prov. 15:25, 274, 485, 537, 545-546
-

- Prov. 15:26**, 433, 537
Prov. 15:27, 505
Prov. 15:28, 371, 441
Prov. 15:29, 360, 546
Prov. 15:30, 466
Prov. 15:31-32, 124
Prov. 15:31, 325
Prov. 15:32, 204, 489
Prov. 15:33, 27, 75, 107, 120, 275
Prov. 16:1, 549
Prov. 16:1-9, 61
Prov. 16:2, 547
Prov. 16:3, 71
Prov. 16:4, 548, 607
Prov. 16:5, 274, 538, 605, 609
Prov. 16:6, 27, 107
Prov. 16:7, 550
Prov. 16:8, 112, 364, 484, 500, 563
Prov. 16:9, 205, 550, 587
Prov. 16:10, 561
Prov. 16:11, 282, 482, 536, 547
Prov. 16:12, 538, 563
Prov. 16:13, 564
Prov. 16:14-15, 566
Prov. 16:16, 88
Prov. 16:17, 205, 369, 614
Prov. 16:18, 277
Prov. 16:19, 263
Prov. 16:20, 23, 330-331, 466, 613-614
Prov. 16:21, 323
Prov. 16:21-23, 126
Prov. 16:23, 328
Prov. 16:24, 328, 466
Prov. 16:25, 205, 306, 376
Prov. 16:26, 283
Prov. 16:27, 153
Prov. 16:27-30, 338
Prov. 16:28, 390
Prov. 16:29-30, 135
Prov. 16:31, 373, 577
Prov. 16:32, 451
Prov. 16:33, 548, 573
Prov. 17:1, 179, 187-188, 193
Prov. 17:2, 235, 331
Prov. 17:3, 547
Prov. 17:4, 338-339, 439
Prov. 17:5, 141, 605
Prov. 17:6, 224
Prov. 17:7, 309, 439
Prov. 17:8, 503
Prov. 17:9, 164-165, 390
Prov. 17:10, 125, 308, 331
Prov. 17:11, 343, 608
Prov. 17:12, 313
Prov. 17:13, 143, 608
Prov. 17:14, 153
Prov. 17:15, 345, 539
Prov. 17:16, 94, 306
Prov. 17:17, 164, 166
Prov. 17:18, 508-509
Prov. 17:19, 154
Prov. 17:20, 438
Prov. 17:21, 204
Prov. 17:23, 507
Prov. 17:24, 94, 306
Prov. 17:25, 204, 232, 316
Prov. 17:26, 559
Prov. 17:27, 442
Prov. 17:28, 310, 327, 329, 442
Prov. 18:1-2, 94
Prov. 18:2, 306, 309
Prov. 18:3, 608-609
Prov. 18:4, 427
Prov. 18:5, 157, 564
Prov. 18:6-7, 310, 438, 599
Prov. 18:8, 443
Prov. 18:9, 293, 447, 640
Prov. 18:10, 548
Prov. 18:11, 266, 505
Prov. 18:12, 274, 277
Prov. 18:13, 310, 441
Prov. 18:14, 471
Prov. 18:15, 126
Prov. 18:16, 503
Prov. 18:17, 152
Prov. 18:18, 572
Prov. 18:19, 152
Prov. 18:20-21, 432
Prov. 18:21, 338
Prov. 18:22, 179-180, 193
Prov. 18:23, 138, 506
Prov. 18:24, 164, 166
Prov. 19:1, 315, 438
Prov. 19:2, 94
Prov. 19:3, 307
Prov. 19:4, 503

Scripture Index

- Prov. 19:5**, 488, 605, 609
Prov. 19:5-9, 438
Prov. 19:6, 560
Prov. 19:7, 138
Prov. 19:8, 94
Prov. 19:9, 488, 605, 609
Prov. 19:10, 313, 566
Prov. 19:11, 451
Prov. 19:12, 560
Prov. 19:13, 179, 188, 190, 193, 232
Prov. 19:14, 23, 179, 180, 182, 193
Prov. 19:15, 285
Prov. 19:16, 17, 124
Prov. 19:17, 138, 503
Prov. 19:18, 215, 467
Prov. 19:19, 215, 453
Prov. 19:20, 119, 332
Prov. 19:21, 90
Prov. 19:22, 485, 532
Prov. 19:23, 27, 109
Prov. 19:24, 289
Prov. 19:25, 119
Prov. 19:26, 204, 214
Prov. 19:26-27, 232
Prov. 19:27, 17, 51, 71
Prov. 19:28, 338, 487
Prov. 19:29, 315, 608-609
Prov. 20:1, 56, 512
Prov. 20:2, 489, 566
Prov. 20:3, 76, 154, 311
Prov. 20:4, 286
Prov. 20:5, 573
Prov. 20:6, 574
Prov. 20:7, 209, 329, 447
Prov. 20:8, 562
Prov. 20:9, 575
Prov. 20:10, 282, 536
Prov. 20:11, 201, 209, 234, 447
Prov. 20:12, 550
Prov. 20:13, 294
Prov. 20:14, 536
Prov. 20:15, 427
Prov. 20:16, 508-509
Prov. 20:17, 393
Prov. 20:18, 127, 271
Prov. 20:19, 153, 164-166, 395, 443
Prov. 20:20, 255
Prov. 20:21, 376, 500, 506
Prov. 20:22, 171, 547
Prov. 20:23, 282, 536
Prov. 20:24, 90
Prov. 20:25, 486
Prov. 20:26, 562
Prov. 20:27, 550
Prov. 20:28, 558
Prov. 20:29, 576
Prov. 20:30, 216
Prov. 21:1, 564
Prov. 21:2, 205, 547
Prov. 21:3, 577
Prov. 21:4, 273
Prov. 21:5, 283
Prov. 21:6, 438, 484, 507
Prov. 21:7, 349
Prov. 21:8, 351, 369
Prov. 21:9, 60, 179, 188, 190, 193
Prov. 21:10, 135
Prov. 21:11, 23, 119
Prov. 21:12, 371, 547, 607
Prov. 21:13, 141, 503
Prov. 21:14, 457, 458, 504
Prov. 21:15, 369, 467
Prov. 21:16, 252-253, 609
Prov. 21:17, 506
Prov. 21:18, 369
Prov. 21:19, 179, 188, 190, 193, 450
Prov. 21:20, 324, 506
Prov. 21:21, 368, 612
Prov. 21:22, 321
Prov. 21:23, 440
Prov. 21:24, 271
Prov. 21:25, 287
Prov. 21:26, 138, 504
Prov. 21:27, 539
Prov. 21:28, 488
Prov. 21:29, 351, 371
Prov. 21:30, 94, 550
Prov. 21:31, 548
Prov. 22:1, 376, 500, 645, 676
Prov. 22:2, 138, 501
Prov. 22:3, 95
Prov. 22:4, 27, 110, 274, 277, 688
Prov. 22:5, 349, 369
-

- Prov. 22:6**, 60, 70, 71, 201, 205, 208, 210, 225, 467, 640
Prov. 22:7, 508-509
Prov. 22:8, 69, 608
Prov. 22:9, 140, 504
Prov. 22:10, 128
Prov. 22:11, 432, 564
Prov. 22:12, 547
Prov. 22:13, 286, 288
Prov. 22:14, 379, 387, 396, 402
Prov. 22:15, 205, 216, 467, 588
Prov. 22:16, 68, 138, 484, 506
Prov. 22:17, 34, 53
Prov. 22:17-21, 126
Prov. 22:20, 34-35, 41-42
Prov. 22:21, 35-36
Prov. 22:22, 138, 545
Prov. 22:23, 138
Prov. 22:24, 60, 450
Prov. 22:24-25, 457
Prov. 22:26, 508-509
Prov. 22:27, 508
Prov. 22:28, 485, 578
Prov. 22:29, 35, 283
Prov. 23:1-3, 566
Prov. 23:4-8, 501
Prov. 23:7, 403, 538, 587, 599, 645
Prov. 23:9, 127, 305, 435
Prov. 23:10-11, 35, 485, 546
Prov. 23:12, 119
Prov. 23:13, 588
Prov. 23:13-14, 205, 216, 467
Prov. 23:14, 204
Prov. 23:15, 231, 331
Prov. 23:15-16, 467
Prov. 23:16, 430
Prov. 23:17, 27, 257
Prov. 23:17-18, 113
Prov. 23:17-23, 257
Prov. 23:18, 257-258, 376
Prov. 23:19, 257-258, 494
Prov. 23:20, 516
Prov. 23:20-21, 252, 255, 257
Prov. 23:22, 43, 214
Prov. 23:22-23, 257
Prov. 23:22-25, 231
Prov. 23:23, 87, 119, 229, 437, 535
Prov. 23:24, 201, 209, 331
Prov. 23:24-25, 214, 467
Prov. 23:26, 405
Prov. 23:26-35, 402
Prov. 23:27, 406, 423
Prov. 23:28, 386, 402
Prov. 23:29-32, 513
Prov. 23:29-35, 50, 56, 513
Prov. 23:31, 396
Prov. 23:31-32, 514, 516
Prov. 23:32, 515
Prov. 23:33, 516, 518
Prov. 23:33-34, 516
Prov. 23:34, 518
Prov. 23:35, 518-519
Prov. 24:1-2, 256, 439
Prov. 24:3, 97
Prov. 24:3-4, 179-180, 193, 201, 209
Prov. 24:5, 127, 321
Prov. 24:6, 331
Prov. 24:7, 76, 94, 306
Prov. 24:8, 351, 540
Prov. 24:9, 328, 540
Prov. 24:10, 579
Prov. 24:11-12, 156, 545
Prov. 24:12, 547
Prov. 24:13-14, 94
Prov. 24:14, 613
Prov. 24:15, 361, 407
Prov. 24:16, 69, 349, 372, 608, 614
Prov. 24:17, 171-172
Prov. 24:18, 172
Prov. 24:19-20, 69, 257
Prov. 24:20, 252, 255, 350, 547, 608
Prov. 24:21-22, 114, 235, 566
Prov. 24:21, 27, 71, 114
Prov. 24:22, 115, 609
Prov. 24:23, 53, 157
Prov. 24:23-34, 53, 61
Prov. 24:24-25, 372, 564
Prov. 24:26, 431, 490
Prov. 24:27, 580
Prov. 24:28, 166, 488
Prov. 24:28-29, 136
Prov. 24:29, 171
Prov. 24:30-34, 287
Prov. 25:1, 53

- Prov. 25:2**, 550
Prov. 25:2-3, 562
Prov. 25:4-5, 564
Prov. 25:6-7, 272
Prov. 25:8, 152, 376
Prov. 25:8-28, 61
Prov. 25:9-10, 136
Prov. 25:9, 443-444
Prov. 25:10, 444
Prov. 25:11, 328, 427, 683
Prov. 25:12, 125
Prov. 25:13, 580
Prov. 25:14, 440, 491
Prov. 25:15, 432, 564
Prov. 25:16, 581, 586
Prov. 25:17, 136
Prov. 25:18, 135, 439, 487
Prov. 25:19, 163, 582
Prov. 25:20, 164, 166, 583
Prov. 25:21-22, 71, 172
Prov. 25:22, 609
Prov. 25:23, 442
Prov. 25:24, 179, 188, 190, 192-193
Prov. 25:25, 433
Prov. 25:26, 252-253, 372
Prov. 25:27, 274, 582, 586
Prov. 25:28, 191, 418
Prov. 26:1, 313
Prov. 26:1-12, 61
Prov. 26:2, 584
Prov. 26:2-3, 315
Prov. 26:4, 70, 327
Prov. 26:4-5, 58, 314
Prov. 26:5, 70, 76
Prov. 26:6-9, 313
Prov. 26:10, 547, 602
Prov. 26:11, 49, 71, 309
Prov. 26:12, 274, 306
Prov. 26:13, 286
Prov. 26:13-16, 61
Prov. 26:14, 62, 285
Prov. 26:15, 62, 289
Prov. 26:16, 294
Prov. 26:17, 153
Prov. 26:17-28, 61
Prov. 26:18-19, 137
Prov. 26:20-21, 444
Prov. 26:20-22, 153
Prov. 26:20-28, 477
Prov. 26:22, 443
Prov. 26:23, 443
Prov. 26:24, 493
Prov. 26:24-26, 443
Prov. 26:25, 493, 540
Prov. 26:27, 69, 585, 609
Prov. 26:28, 395, 436, 493
Prov. 27:1, 71, 275, 440
Prov. 27:2, 273, 587, 645
Prov. 27:3, 313
Prov. 27:3-4, 452
Prov. 27:4, 151
Prov. 27:5, 164, 166, 173
Prov. 27:5-6, 494
Prov. 27:6, 164
Prov. 27:7, 586
Prov. 27:8, 179, 183, 187, 193
Prov. 27:9, 164, 166, 173, 430, 467
Prov. 27:10, 166
Prov. 27:11, 226
Prov. 27:12, 326
Prov. 27:13, 508-509
Prov. 27:14, 173
Prov. 27:15, 188
Prov. 27:15-16, 179, 190, 193
Prov. 27:16, 188, 191
Prov. 27:17, 164
Prov. 27:18, 282, 503
Prov. 27:19, 586, 651
Prov. 27:20, 58, 501
Prov. 27:21, 587
Prov. 27:22, 76, 309
Prov. 27:23-24, 284
Prov. 27:23-27, 19, 50, 61
Prov. 27:25-27, 284
Prov. 28:1, 348, 370
Prov. 28:1-13, 61
Prov. 28:2, 562
Prov. 28:3, 138
Prov. 28:4, 588
Prov. 28:4-5, 127, 372
Prov. 28:6, 500
Prov. 28:7, 214, 252, 254
Prov. 28:8, 483, 508-509
Prov. 28:9, 124, 540-541
Prov. 28:10, 369, 609, 613

- Prov. 28:11**, 273, 501
Prov. 28:12, 563
Prov. 28:13, 276
Prov. 28:14, 110, 115, 127, 468
Prov. 28:15, 560
Prov. 28:15-16, 61
Prov. 28:16, 503, 560
Prov. 28:17, 155
Prov. 28:18, 329, 369, 608, 613
Prov. 28:19, 282
Prov. 28:20, 500, 609, 611
Prov. 28:21, 157, 489
Prov. 28:22, 500
Prov. 28:23, 127, 164, 166, 173, 431
Prov. 28:24, 235
Prov. 28:25, 274, 466
Prov. 28:26, 306, 329, 576
Prov. 28:27, 138, 504
Prov. 28:28, 563
Prov. 29:1, 124
Prov. 29:2, 563
Prov. 29:3, 97, 252, 254, 385
Prov. 29:4, 562
Prov. 29:5, 135, 395, 436, 493
Prov. 29:6, 369, 608, 612
Prov. 29:7, 138, 366
Prov. 29:8, 327, 562
Prov. 29:9, 313
Prov. 29:10, 369
Prov. 29:11, 311, 327, 442, 477
Prov. 29:12, 564
Prov. 29:13, 138, 546
Prov. 29:14, 560
Prov. 29:15, 217
Prov. 29:15-17, 238, 467
Prov. 29:16, 371, 561, 608, 612
Prov. 29:17, 217, 556
Prov. 29:18, 128, 468, 595
Prov. 29:19, 588
Prov. 29:20, 441
Prov. 29:21, 589
Prov. 29:22, 450, 453
Prov. 29:23, 68, 276-277
Prov. 29:24, 489
Prov. 29:25, 466
Prov. 29:26, 561
Prov. 29:27, 361, 541
Prov. 30:1, 40, 53-54
Prov. 30:1-6, 55
Prov. 30:1-33, 54
Prov. 30:2-4, 55
Prov. 30:3, 595
Prov. 30:4, 595
Prov. 30:5, 594, 596
Prov. 30:5-6, 55, 114, 551
Prov. 30:6, 532, 596
Prov. 30:7-9, 596
Prov. 30:8-9, 494, 497, 501
Prov. 30:10, 597
Prov. 30:11-15, 597
Prov. 30:12, 393
Prov. 30:15-31, 19, 61
Prov. 30:17-18, 235
Prov. 30:20, 391, 393
Prov. 30:33, 453
Prov. 31:1, 40, 53, 56, 58
Prov. 31:1-2, 675
Prov. 31:1-31, 53-54
Prov. 31:3, 522
Prov. 31:3-7, 565
Prov. 31:4, 521
Prov. 31:4-7, 513, 520-521
Prov. 31:6, 521-524
Prov. 31:6-7, 523
Prov. 31:8, 156
Prov. 31:9, 141, 559
Prov. 31:10, 56, 180, 676
Prov. 31:10-31, 4, 675
Prov. 31:11-12, 677
Prov. 31:13-15, 678
Prov. 31:16-20, 679
Prov. 31:18, 255
Prov. 31:21-22, 681
Prov. 31:22, 422
Prov. 31:23, 682
Prov. 31:24, 679
Prov. 31:25-26, 683
Prov. 31:26, 64
Prov. 31:27, 640, 681
Prov. 31:28, 588
Prov. 31:28-31, 684
Prov. 31:29-31, 685
Prov. 31:30, 25, 55, 57, 646
Prov. 31:31, 588

Scripture Index

ECCLESIASTES

Eccl. 1:1, 55
Eccl. 1:9-10, 533
Eccl. 2:1-11, 52
Eccl. 2:3, 56
Eccl. 2:4-10, 666
Eccl. 2:4-11, 356
Eccl. 2:11, 52, 113
Eccl. 2:14, 329
Eccl. 2:18, 249
Eccl. 2:18-19, 113
Eccl. 3:7, 442
Eccl. 4:13, 629
Eccl. 5:1, 533
Eccl. 5:8, 141
Eccl. 5:10, 356, 667
Eccl. 5:10-11, 113
Eccl. 7:1, 376
Eccl. 7:5, 395
Eccl. 7:9, 668
Eccl. 7:26, 56, 378, 383
Eccl. 8:11, 155, 385
Eccl. 8:11-13, 115
Eccl. 8:13, 115
Eccl. 9:3, 575
Eccl. 9:9, 415
Eccl. 9:10, 282
Eccl. 10:12, 633, 669
Eccl. 10:14, 669
Eccl. 10:15, 669
Eccl. 11:9-10, 109
Eccl. 12:1-7, 28, 52
Eccl. 12:7, 626
Eccl. 12:12, 7
Eccl. 12:13, 25, 364, 447, 468, 629, 626
Eccl. 12:13-14, 27-28, 52, 55, 247, 257, 341, 533, 542
Eccl. 12:14, 269, 416

SONG OF SOLOMON

S. of Sol. 1:2, 416
S. of Sol. 1:13, 411
S. of Sol. 7:10, 416

ISAIAH

Isa. 2:2-3, 114
Isa. 5:11, 377

Isa. 5:20, 371, 559
Isa. 5:20-23, 345
Isa. 6:5, 107
Isa. 7:14, 623, 624
Isa. 9:6-7, 619
Isa. 10:13, 26, 31
Isa. 10:15, 440
Isa. 14:4, 49
Isa. 16:10, 516
Isa. 18:1, 423
Isa. 22:2, 392
Isa. 28:16, 357
Isa. 28:29, 23
Isa. 30:10, 539
Isa. 31:1-2, 26, 44
Isa. 36:6, 391
Isa. 51:1, 423
Isa. 55:8-9, 433
Isa. 58:1, 567
Isa. 59:1-2, 109, 236
Isa. 59:2, 252
Isa. 59:7, 533
Isa. 62:5, 415
Isa. 64:7, 420
Isa. 65:8, 516
Isa. 66:13, 215

JEREMIAH

Jer. 2:8, 29
Jer. 5:13, 29
Jer. 6:10, 335
Jer. 6:16, 346
Jer. 6:20, 348
Jer. 8:6, 351
Jer. 8:8-9, 29
Jer. 9:3, 488
Jer. 9:5, 488
Jer. 9:23-24, 90
Jer. 9:24, 492
Jer. 10:10, 175
Jer. 10:23, 73, 264, 306, 466, 551
Jer. 12:1, 323
Jer. 16:17, 416
Jer. 16:19, 175
Jer. 17:11, 484
Jer. 18:18, 29, 62
Jer. 20:9, 340
Jer. 22:13, 484

Jer. 22:16, 141
Jer. 31:22, 623
Jer. 32:19, 416
Jer. 35:13-15, 230
Jer. 37:21, 490
Jer. 49:7, 31
Jer. 51:59b, 392

EZEKIEL

Ezek. 3:17, 334, 389
Ezek. 3:17-21, 370
Ezek. 3:18-21, 334
Ezek. 7:18, 411
Ezek. 7:26, 128
Ezek. 12:21-25, 81
Ezek. 16:49, 148, 407
Ezek. 17:2, 49
Ezek. 17:18, 390
Ezek. 18:8, 508
Ezek. 18:13, 508
Ezek. 18:17, 508
Ezek. 18:25, 268
Ezek. 20:49, 49
Ezek. 22:29, 484
Ezek. 23:3, 411
Ezek. 23:8, 411
Ezek. 23:19, 379
Ezek. 23:21, 411
Ezek. 28:2, 538

DANIEL

Dan. 1:8, 114
Dan. 1:17-20, 30
Dan. 2:21, 90
Dan. 2:37, 148
Dan. 2:39, 148
Dan. 2:44, 619
Dan. 4:27, 148
Dan. 4:30, 440
Dan. 4:32, 556
Dan. 5:1-2, 571
Dan. 5:5-6, 572
Dan. 5:26-28, 572
Dan. 5:30, 572
Dan. 7:13-14, 549
Dan. 9:11-15, 19

HOSEA

Hos. 2:5-6, 678
Hos. 4:6, 295, 595

Hos. 4:16, 392
Hos. 7:2, 416
Hos. 8:7, 250, 359

JOEL

Joel 2:24, 516

JONAH

Jonah 1:10, 75
Jonah 4:1, 447
Jonah 4:2, 447
Jonah 4:3, 447
Jonah 4:7, 448
Jonah 4:8, 448
Jonah 4:9, 448
Jonah 4:10-11, 448

MICAH

Mic. 2:1-3, 533
Mic. 2:4, 49
Mic. 5:2, 623
Mic. 6:8, 352
Mic. 6:11, 282, 482

HABAKKUK

Hab. 1:1-2:5, 81
Hab. 2:6, 49
Hab. 2:15, 515
Hab. 3:17ff, 470

ZECHARIAH

Zech. 6:12-13, 619
Zech. 8:19, 437
Zech. 9:2, 31

MALACHI

Mal. 2:10, 422
Mal. 2:14-16, 422
Mal. 2:15-16, 183
Mal. 3:6, 242
Mal. 4:4, 19

MATTHEW

Matt. 1:1ff, 617
Matt. 1:21, 627
Matt. 1:22-23, 624
Matt. 2:1-12, 47
Matt. 3:17, 621
Matt. 4:1-11, 87
Matt. 4:4, 104

- Matt. 4:8-9**, 232
Matt. 4:10, 625
Matt. 5:3, 106-107, 531
Matt. 5:4, 108
Matt. 5:4-6, 107
Matt. 5:6, 109, 586, 645
Matt. 5:8, 246, 404
Matt. 5:9, 465, 535
Matt. 5:10-12, 469
Matt. 5:11-12, 168, 585
Matt. 5:13ff, 372
Matt. 5:13-16, 525
Matt. 5:14, 462
Matt. 5:16, 158, 263, 270, 567
Matt. 5:22, 450
Matt. 5:25-26, 458
Matt. 5:28, 385, 403, 404, 417
Matt. 5:32, 185
Matt. 5:37, 492
Matt. 5:38-42, 458
Matt. 5:39, 136, 556
Matt. 5:41, 172
Matt. 5:43-47, 453
Matt. 5:43-48, 168-169
Matt. 5:44, 167, 172
Matt. 5:45, 546
Matt. 5:48, 543
Matt. 6:1, 578
Matt. 6:1-2, 233
Matt. 6:2, 578
Matt. 6:5, 578
Matt. 6:11, 406, 418, 597
Matt. 6:12-13, 108
Matt. 6:13, 419
Matt. 6:14-15, 143
Matt. 6:16, 578
Matt. 6:19-21, 97, 113, 427
Matt. 6:24, 231
Matt. 6:26, 137
Matt. 6:28-29, 616
Matt. 6:33, 109, 113, 181, 213, 228,
237, 239, 257, 284, 358, 580, 636
Matt. 6:34, 284
Matt. 7:1-5, 122
Matt. 7:6, 305
Matt. 7:7, 106
Matt. 7:7-11, 101
Matt. 7:12, 144, 170, 473, 536
Matt. 7:13ff, 68
Matt. 7:13-14, 119
Matt. 7:15, 426
Matt. 7:16, 122
Matt. 7:21, 350
Matt. 7:21-23, 105
Matt. 7:21-27, 126, 299
Matt. 7:24-25, 320, 612
Matt. 7:24-27, 106, 357, 661
Matt. 7:26-27, 320
Matt. 9:13, 578
Matt. 9:37, 300
Matt. 10:22, 171, 373
Matt. 10:32-33, 372
Matt. 11:10-11, 581
Matt. 11:25, 48
Matt. 11:28-30, 116
Matt. 11:29-30, 627
Matt. 12:7, 578
Matt. 12:30, 603
Matt. 12:34, 246, 488, 645
Matt. 12:34-35, 328, 587
Matt. 12:34-37, 134
Matt. 12:36-37, 670
Matt. 12:36-37, 238, 339, 433
Matt. 12:42, 47-48, 574, 617
Matt. 13:10-17, 75
Matt. 13:19, 285
Matt. 13:44, 618
Matt. 13:44-46, 88
Matt. 13:45-46, 618
Matt. 15:3-9, 259
Matt. 15:9, 106, 114
Matt. 15:19, 534
Matt. 15:22, 617
Matt. 15:23, 327
Matt. 15:25, 628
Matt. 16:16, 624
Matt. 16:18, 196, 357, 619
Matt. 16:25-26, 469
Matt. 17:1ff, 622
Matt. 17:5, 621
Matt. 18:3, 107
Matt. 18:4, 278
Matt. 18:15ff, 136
Matt. 18:16-17, 444
Matt. 18:18, 579
Matt. 19:1-9, 228

Matt. 19:4-6, 198
Matt. 19:5, 181
Matt. 19:6, 185
Matt. 19:9, 185, 413
Matt. 19:14, 225
Matt. 20:20-28, 531
Matt. 20:25-28, 277
Matt. 20:28, 166
Matt. 21:33, 516
Matt. 22:36, 147
Matt. 22:37, 147
Matt. 22:39, 137
Matt. 22:39-40, 147
Matt. 22:42, 618
Matt. 23:12, 278
Matt. 23:13, 426
Matt. 23:14, 142
Matt. 23:16, 426
Matt. 23:17, 426
Matt. 23:27-28, 660
Matt. 23:33, 426
Matt. 23:34, 47
Matt. 24:1-35, 146
Matt. 24:36, 146
Matt. 25:1-13, 146, 320
Matt. 25:14-30, 146, 508
Matt. 25:21, 300
Matt. 25:24-25, 290
Matt. 25:26, 290
Matt. 25:30, 299
Matt. 25:31-46, 142, 146, 320
Matt. 25:34, 320
Matt. 25:37, 146
Matt. 25:40, 147
Matt. 25:41, 320
Matt. 25:44, 146
Matt. 25:45, 147
Matt. 25:46, 175
Matt. 26:28, 509
Matt. 26:39, 267, 625
Matt. 26:41, 402
Matt. 26:48-75, 168
Matt. 26:52, 533
Matt. 26:56, 168
Matt. 27:39ff, 168
Matt. 28:9, 628
Matt. 28:18, 114, 625
Matt. 28:18-20, 596
Matt. 28:19, 525

MARK

Mark 1:1, 624
Mark 3:1-5, 442
Mark 3:5, 449, 454
Mark 4:20, 363
Mark 4:24, 125
Mark 6:2, 47, 619
Mark 6:11, 172
Mark 6:21-25, 521
Mark 7:20-23, 246
Mark 7:24ff, 617
Mark 10:24-25, 112
Mark 10:27, 175
Mark 10:28-30, 71
Mark 10:30, 270
Mark 10:47, 618
Mark 12:28-34, 103
Mark 12:29-31, 18, 536
Mark 12:31, 147
Mark 14:7, 139
Mark 14:55-59, 534
Mark 15:10, 149
Mark 15:23, 523
Mark 16:9, 627
Mark 16:15-16, 196, 477, 535

LUKE

Luke 2:40, 47
Luke 2:46, 405
Luke 2:46-47, 47
Luke 2:49, 154
Luke 2:52, 47
Luke 3:23-38, 617
Luke 4:18, 420
Luke 4:23, 47
Luke 5:31-32, 660
Luke 6:26, 168
Luke 6:27-36, 536
Luke 6:29, 170
Luke 6:36, 143
Luke 6:45, 111
Luke 6:46, 105, 298
Luke 6:47-49, 357
Luke 8:11, 196
Luke 8:15, 196, 213, 363
Luke 8:18, 125
Luke 8:8-18, 106
Luke 9:62, 373
Luke 10:17-18, 343

Scripture Index

- Luke 10:25-37**, 144, 466
Luke 10:30-32, 366
Luke 11:8, 162
Luke 11:31, 47, 553, 561
Luke 11:49, 47
Luke 12:15, 112, 364, 473, 666
Luke 12:16-19, 664
Luke 12:19-21, 364
Luke 12:20, 330, 665
Luke 12:21, 330, 364
Luke 12:48, 559
Luke 13:24, 535
Luke 14:7-11, 272
Luke 14:11, 278
Luke 14:28-30, 491
Luke 14:31-32, 491
Luke 15:11-24, 590
Luke 15:13, 254, 385
Luke 15:24, 162
Luke 15:30, 254, 385
Luke 16:1-11, 324
Luke 16:8, 324
Luke 16:11, 324
Luke 16:19, 572
Luke 16:19-21, 366
Luke 16:19-31, 113, 282, 301
Luke 16:21, 149
Luke 16:25, 149, 572
Luke 17:7-10, 590
Luke 17:10, 363
Luke 18:1, 579
Luke 18:8, 579
Luke 18:9, 278
Luke 18:10-14, 278
Luke 18:12, 575
Luke 18:13, 575
Luke 18:14, 575
Luke 18:27, 175
Luke 19:10, 100, 116, 627
Luke 20:25, 566
Luke 21:3-4, 498
Luke 22:36, 487
Luke 22:39-46, 472
Luke 23:11, 168
Luke 23:34, 167-168, 171
- JOHN**
John 1:1, 66
John 1:1-3, 553, 622
John 1:14, 160, 553, 622, 624
John 1:15, 622
- John 1:18**, 66, 624
John 1:29, 116
John 1:30, 622
John 1:49, 624
John 2:24-25, 570
John 3:16, 102, 112, 116, 268, 335, 473, 624
John 3:18, 624
John 4:10-14, 574
John 4:14, 109
John 4:24, 228
John 4:34, 625
John 4:35, 300
John 5:17, 281
John 6:27, 97
John 6:38, 268, 625
John 7:24, 152, 164, 167, 570
John 8:4, 400
John 8:24, 199
John 8:29, 625
John 8:31-32, 284
John 8:32, 105, 259, 426, 535, 559
John 8:34, 258
John 8:40-44, 426
John 8:44, 17, 532
John 8:58, 622
John 9:1-3, 69
John 9:4, 239, 282, 300
John 9:31, 541
John 10:10, 121, 273, 478
John 11:5-11, 162
John 11:45, 151
John 12:42-43, 273
John 12:48, 316
John 13:18, 583
John 13:35, 475
John 14:1-3, 175
John 14:15, 642
John 15:5, 538
John 15:18-21, 115
John 15:19, 342
John 17:4, 625
John 17:14, 342
John 17:14-16, 634
John 17:17, 105, 535
John 17:20-21, 342, 535
John 18:36, 169
John 19:15, 621
John 19:29-30, 523
John 20:31, 624

ACTS

Acts 1:26, 573
Acts 2:23, 344
Acts 2:30, 620
Acts 2:32-36, 549
Acts 2:36, 114
Acts 2:38, 121, 196, 199, 477, 541
Acts 2:41, 285
Acts 2:41-42, 196
Acts 2:41-47, 477
Acts 2:42, 114, 228
Acts 2:47, 196
Acts 4:11, 357
Acts 4:32, 642
Acts 5:1-9, 439
Acts 5:29, 114, 566, 640
Acts 6:1-7, 538
Acts 6:3, 48
Acts 6:10, 48
Acts 7:22, 47
Acts 7:58, 168
Acts 7:60, 167
Acts 8:1-3, 141
Acts 8:4, 240
Acts 8:9-13, 259
Acts 8:39, 462, 472
Acts 9:1, 168
Acts 9:4, 141
Acts 9:5, 141
Acts 9:6, 541
Acts 9:39, 642
Acts 10:2, 104
Acts 10:2-4, 360
Acts 10:33-35, 104
Acts 10:34, 597
Acts 10:34-35, 156, 268, 350, 367
Acts 10:35, 577
Acts 13:46, 105-106
Acts 15:13ff, 620
Acts 16:25, 469
Acts 17:11, 284, 323
Acts 17:28-29, 102
Acts 17:30, 199
Acts 17:31, 161, 548
Acts 18:6, 172
Acts 18:24-26, 174
Acts 20:24, 361
Acts 20:28, 167

Acts 20:32, 551
Acts 20:35, 466
Acts 22:16, 199, 477, 541
Acts 23:1, 578
Acts 24:25, 455
Acts 25:23, 662
Acts 26:9-11, 578
Acts 26:25, 246
Acts 26:30, 663

ROMANS

Rom. 1:4, 344
Rom. 1:16, 196, 199, 404
Rom. 1:16-17, 477, 610
Rom. 1:18-21, 18
Rom. 1:18-22, 596
Rom. 1:18-32, 39, 106, 115
Rom. 1:24-32, 199
Rom. 1:32, 251, 377
Rom. 2:1, 346
Rom. 2:8-9, 257
Rom. 2:11, 367, 597
Rom. 2:29, 588
Rom. 3:4, 211
Rom. 3:5, 174
Rom. 3:10-18, 576
Rom. 3:15, 71
Rom. 3:23, 109
Rom. 3:26, 486
Rom. 4:25, 627
Rom. 5:3, 472
Rom. 5:6-8, 473
Rom. 5:8, 102, 116, 268
Rom. 6:3-4, 199, 477
Rom. 6:16, 258
Rom. 6:23, 108, 236-237, 273, 606
Rom. 8:6, 337
Rom. 8:7, 542
Rom. 8:13, 97
Rom. 8:16-18, 171
Rom. 8:18, 360, 469
Rom. 8:24, 358
Rom. 8:28, 359
Rom. 8:31, 111
Rom. 8:35-39, 174, 472
Rom. 8:37, 112
Rom. 9:2-3, 542
Rom. 9:30-33, 107

- Rom. 10:1**, 542
Rom. 10:3, 360
Rom. 10:9-10, 199
Rom. 10:10ff, 431
Rom. 10:10-18, 535
Rom. 10:15, 535
Rom. 10:17, 199, 347, 539
Rom. 11:22, 207, 361, 486
Rom. 11:33, 47, 241
Rom. 11:33-36, 16
Rom. 12:1-2, 473, 594, 653
Rom. 12:3, 645
Rom. 12:10, 165
Rom. 12:11, 644
Rom. 12:14, 168
Rom. 12:15, 584
Rom. 12:16, 71
Rom. 12:18, 457, 535
Rom. 12:19, 161
Rom. 12:19-21, 458
Rom. 12:20, 71, 172
Rom. 12:21, 172
Rom. 13:1, 114, 557
Rom. 13:3-4, 533, 556, 559
Rom. 13:9, 147
Rom. 13:10, 642
Rom. 13:13, 166
Rom. 13:13-14, 238
Rom. 14:10-12, 161, 533
Rom. 14:19, 337, 535
Rom. 15:3, 625
Rom. 15:4, 148, 335, 509, 595
Rom. 16:1, 330
Rom. 16:3-4, 642
Rom. 16:16, 213
Rom. 16:17-18, 114, 346, 393, 540
Rom. 16:27, 47
- I CORINTHIANS**
1 Cor. 1:10, 535
1 Cor. 1:18-31, 20, 90, 121
1 Cor. 1:19-20, 672
1 Cor. 1:30, 66
1 Cor. 2:11, 570
1 Cor. 2:11-16, 571
1 Cor. 3:3, 151
1 Cor. 3:11, 357, 612
1 Cor. 3:18-19, 48
- 1 Cor. 3:18-21**, 90
1 Cor. 4:1-2, 364
1 Cor. 4:2, 324
1 Cor. 5:1ff, 198
1 Cor. 5:6, 402
1 Cor. 5:9, 407
1 Cor. 5:10, 423
1 Cor. 5:12, 122
1 Cor. 6:2, 368
1 Cor. 6:7, 172
1 Cor. 6:9-10, 387
1 Cor. 6:9-11, 199
1 Cor. 6:11, 388
1 Cor. 6:18, 404
1 Cor. 7:2, 598
1 Cor. 7:2-5, 412
1 Cor. 7:9, 411
1 Cor. 7:9-11, 184
1 Cor. 9:9, 569
1 Cor. 9:9-10, 137
1 Cor. 9:21, 114
1 Cor. 10:11, 335
1 Cor. 10:12, 239, 388, 419
1 Cor. 10:13, 174
1 Cor. 11:3, 212
1 Cor. 13:1-7, 182
1 Cor. 13:4, 263
1 Cor. 13:8-11, 573
1 Cor. 13:13, 190
1 Cor. 14:24, 118
1 Cor. 14:33, 534
1 Cor. 15:24-28, 619, 624
1 Cor. 15:33, 227, 238, 245, 404, 457
1 Cor. 15:55-57, 267
1 Cor. 15:57, 175
1 Cor. 15:58, 111, 196, 199-200, 247, 642
1 Cor. 16:1-2, 198
1 Cor. 16:13, 111
- 2 CORINTHIANS**
2 Cor. 1:1, 405
2 Cor. 1:12, 48
2 Cor. 2:11, 197
2 Cor. 4:16-18, 360
2 Cor. 4:16-5:10, 469
2 Cor. 5:1, 361

2 Cor. 5:10, 257, 269, 391, 417, 533, 548
2 Cor. 5:11, 468
2 Cor. 5:15, 298
2 Cor. 6:16, 239
2 Cor. 6:17, 168, 407, 418
2 Cor. 8:1-5, 299
2 Cor. 8:1-6, 499
2 Cor. 8:21, 491
2 Cor. 9:7, 239
2 Cor. 9:8, 175
2 Cor. 9:15, 618
2 Cor. 11:14, 391
2 Cor. 12:7-9, 361
2 Cor. 12:9-10, 110
2 Cor. 13:5, 122

GALATIANS

Gal. 1:6-9, 106, 114
Gal. 1:10, 273
Gal. 1:13-16, 259
Gal. 2:20, 472
Gal. 3:1-4, 662
Gal. 3:26-27, 199
Gal. 3:27, 477
Gal. 4:16, 168, 276
Gal. 5:1, 554
Gal. 5:4, 173, 207
Gal. 5:9, 402
Gal. 5:16, 418
Gal. 5:19-21, 185, 387, 525
Gal. 5:20, 452, 534
Gal. 5:21, 512
Gal. 5:22, 337
Gal. 5:22-23, 456
Gal. 5:22-24, 109
Gal. 6:1-2, 144
Gal. 6:7, 155
Gal. 6:7-8, 249, 432, 533, 586, 601
Gal. 6:7-9, 362
Gal. 6:7-10, 143, 597
Gal. 6:8, 418
Gal. 6:9, 156
Gal. 6:9-10, 143
Gal. 6:10, 535, 538, 642

EPHESIANS

Eph. 1:1, 210
Eph. 1:3, 111, 269, 361

Eph. 1:3-14, 472, 477
Eph. 1:7, 471
Eph. 1:8, 48
Eph. 2:1, 252
Eph. 2:1-2, 341
Eph. 2:4ff, 618
Eph. 2:10, 297
Eph. 2:12, 538
Eph. 2:20, 357
Eph. 3:9-11, 48
Eph. 3:10, 47-48, 550
Eph. 4:1, 372
Eph. 4:2-3, 452
Eph. 4:15, 633, 643
Eph. 4:16, 403
Eph. 4:25, 534
Eph. 4:26, 190, 311, 441, 453
Eph. 4:26-27, 191
Eph. 4:29, 227
Eph. 4:31, 456
Eph. 4:32, 377
Eph. 5:3-5, 238
Eph. 5:4, 137
Eph. 5:11, 114, 168, 174, 326, 342
Eph. 5:15, 48, 247
Eph. 5:16, 386
Eph. 5:18, 525
Eph. 5:21-32, 192
Eph. 5:23, 212-213, 640
Eph. 5:23-27, 472, 477
Eph. 5:23-32, 185
Eph. 5:24, 394
Eph. 5:33, 186, 394
Eph. 6:1-4, 201, 210, 212, 225, 597
Eph. 6:4, 206, 237, 259, 467
Eph. 6:5-6, 507
Eph. 6:9, 367
Eph. 6:10-17, 373
Eph. 6:10-18, 174
Eph. 6:11, 418
Eph. 6:15, 535
Eph. 6:18, 237
Eph. 6:21, 581

PHILIPPIANS

Phil. 1:17, 115, 406
Phil. 1:21, 472
Phil. 1:27, 535
Phil. 2:1-4, 452

Phil. 2:3, 164, 452

Phil. 2:3-4, 532

Phil. 2:3-8, 267

Phil. 2:4, 165

Phil. 2:5-8, 171

Phil. 2:12, 111

Phil. 2:14, 190

Phil. 2:15, 567

Phil. 2:25, 162

Phil. 3:12-14, 362

Phil. 3:13-14, 243

Phil. 3:14, 246, 372

Phil. 4:1-3, 162

Phil. 4:4, 237, 462, 472, 474, 611

Phil. 4:8, 258, 418, 536, 645, 688

Phil. 4:7, 430

Phil. 4:11, 638

Phil. 4:11-13, 594

Phil. 4:13, 174, 362

COLOSSIANS

Col. 1:7, 581

Col. 1:9, 48

Col. 1:14, 471

Col. 1:15, 48

Col. 1:16-17, 66

Col. 1:28, 48, 335

Col. 2:3, 48, 66, 241, 574

Col. 2:8, 106, 114

Col. 2:12, 199

Col. 2:14, 509

Col. 2:20-23, 106

Col. 2:23, 48

Col. 3:1-2, 473

Col. 3:1-4, 243

Col. 3:16, 228, 237

Col. 3:17, 114, 196-197

Col. 3:20, 212

Col. 3:21, 206

Col. 3:25, 597

Col. 4:5, 48

Col. 4:6, 328

Col. 4:7, 581

Col. 4:9, 581

1 THESSALONIANS

1 Thess. 4:3-4, 404

2 THESSALONIANS

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 198

1 TIMOTHY

1 Tim. 1:12, 581

1 Tim. 1:17, 18

1 Tim. 1:18, 404

1 Tim. 2:1-2, 567

1 Tim. 2:2, 392

1 Tim. 2:4, 367

1 Tim. 2:9, 227, 238, 397, 643

1 Tim. 2:9-10, 650

1 Tim. 2:10, 397

1 Tim. 3:3, 519

1 Tim. 3:6, 263, 343

1 Tim. 3:8, 519

1 Tim. 3:10, 212

1 Tim. 3:15, 213

1 Tim. 4:7-8, 71

1 Tim. 4:8, 358, 577

1 Tim. 4:11, 406

1 Tim. 4:13, 371

1 Tim. 4:16, 263, 373

1 Tim. 5:6, 253

1 Tim. 5:13, 165

1 Tim. 5:16, 538

1 Tim. 5:18, 569

1 Tim. 5:20, 157

1 Tim. 5:21, 157

1 Tim. 5:24, 533

1 Tim. 6:2, 406

1 Tim. 6:5, 249

1 Tim. 6:6-10, 497

1 Tim. 6:6-8, 637

1 Tim. 6:9-10, 249

1 Tim. 6:10, 249, 351

1 Tim. 6:13, 538

1 Tim. 6:17, 499, 538

1 Tim. 6:17-19, 497

1 Tim. 6:19, 356

2 TIMOTHY

2 Tim. 1:16, 166

2 Tim. 2:15, 196, 228, 259, 464, 645

2 Tim. 2:22, 238, 403, 404, 406, 418

2 Tim. 2:26, 406

2 Tim. 3:6, 395

2 Tim. 3:12, 168

2 Tim. 3:15, 212, 237, 317

2 Tim. 3:16, 7

2 Tim. 3:16-17, 161, 196, 201, 551, 596

2 Tim. 4:2, 118
2 Tim. 4:6-8, 174
2 Tim. 4:8, 258
2 Tim. 4:13, 325
2 Tim. 4:18, 174

TITUS

Tit. 1:2, 358, 437
Tit. 1:12, 300
Tit. 2:3, 519
Tit. 2:3-4, 406
Tit. 2:3-5, 657
Tit. 2:4, 392
Tit. 2:5, 660
Tit. 2:8, 636
Tit. 2:10, 158, 447, 463
Tit. 2:11-12, 317
Tit. 2:12, 634
Tit. 2:14, 297
Tit. 3:5, 559
Tit. 3:5-7, 576
Tit. 3:8, 297
Tit. 3:14, 297

HEBREWS

Heb. 1:2-3, 48
Heb. 1:6, 628
Heb. 2:9, 102, 116
Heb. 2:15, 155
Heb. 3:4, 361, 550
Heb. 3:12-19, 373
Heb. 3:13, 379
Heb. 4:9, 300
Heb. 4:13, 400
Heb. 4:15, 450, 516
Heb. 4:15-16, 348
Heb. 5:7, 26
Heb. 5:8-9, 350, 477
Heb. 5:12, 325
Heb. 6:10, 544
Heb. 6:18, 175, 437
Heb. 6:18-19, 111
Heb. 6:19, 358
Heb. 7:25, 175
Heb. 8:12, 377
Heb. 9:14, 623
Heb. 9:27, 597
Heb. 10:5-9, 625

Heb. 10:23, 258
Heb. 10:25, 198, 636
Heb. 10:30, 161
Heb. 10:31, 257, 387
Heb. 10:34, 470
Heb. 11:1, 199
Heb. 11:4, 347, 539
Heb. 11:6, 105, 199, 284
Heb. 11:10, 360
Heb. 11:16, 360
Heb. 11:24-25, 233
Heb. 11:24-26, 163
Heb. 11:25, 368, 401
Heb. 11:26, 233
Heb. 11:32, 369
Heb. 12:1-2, 472
Heb. 12:2, 246, 258
Heb. 12:5, 118
Heb. 12:5-6, 71
Heb. 12:5-11, 102, 589
Heb. 12:9, 102, 305
Heb. 12:11, 173
Heb. 12:15, 534
Heb. 12:28, 357, 635
Heb. 12:29, 174
Heb. 13:4, 187, 234, 390, 412, 417, 598
Heb. 13:5, 356, 637
Heb. 13:8, 242, 623
Heb. 13:23, 405

JAMES

Jas. 1:2-3, 472, 474
Jas. 1:5, 242, 304, 435, 464, 481, 561
Jas. 1:5-6, 21
Jas. 1:13-15, 17
Jas. 1:14-15, 417-418
Jas. 1:15, 606
Jas. 1:17, 242, 324, 356, 401, 464
Jas. 1:19, 136, 272, 327, 371, 455-456, 534
Jas. 1:19-20, 441
Jas. 1:20, 191
Jas. 1:22, 49
Jas. 1:25, 114, 196
Jas. 1:27, 286, 535, 538, 642
Jas. 2:1-4, 655

Jas. 2:8, 137
Jas. 2:9, 164
Jas. 2:13, 141
Jas. 2:14, 297
Jas. 2:17, 297
Jas. 2:18-26, 105
Jas. 2:20, 49, 297
Jas. 2:23, 174
Jas. 2:24, 297
Jas. 2:26, 297, 604
Jas. 3:1, 125
Jas. 3:2, 456
Jas. 3:4, 598
Jas. 3:5-6, 669
Jas. 3:10, 486
Jas. 3:10-11, 636
Jas. 3:11-12, 487
Jas. 3:13, 48, 325
Jas. 3:13-17, 322
Jas. 3:13-18, 48, 90
Jas. 3:14-15, 534
Jas. 3:15-17, 44
Jas. 3:17, 144, 242
Jas. 3:17-18, 363
Jas. 3:18, 362
Jas. 4:1-2, 268
Jas. 4:4, 169, 397
Jas. 4:4-10, 268
Jas. 4:6, 71, 268
Jas. 4:7, 111
Jas. 4:7-10, 108
Jas. 4:8, 329
Jas. 4:8-10, 572
Jas. 4:10, 266
Jam. 4:13, 71
Jam. 4:13ff, 690
Jas. 4:13-15, 71, 275
Jas. 4:17, 156, 198, 431
Jas. 5:1-6, 505
Jas. 5:11, 108, 359
Jas. 5:13, 361, 612
Jas. 5:16, 612

1 PETER

1 Pet. 1:3-4, 258
1 Pet. 1:15, 543
1 Pet. 1:17, 164
1 Pet. 1:22, 535

1 Pet. 2:2, 325
1 Pet. 2:11, 238, 380, 418
1 Pet. 2:11-12, 525
1 Pet. 2:13, 194
1 Pet. 2:17, 71, 114, 565
1 Pet. 2:21, 168, 171
1 Pet. 2:22, 450
1 Pet. 2:22-24, 516
1 Pet. 2:23, 167
1 Pet. 3:1, 212, 394
1 Pet. 3:3-4, 653
1 Pet. 3:4, 392
1 Pet. 3:5, 212
1 Pet. 3:6, 640
1 Pet. 3:7, 186, 394
1 Pet. 3:10, 435
1 Pet. 3:12, 347, 360
1 Pet. 3:15, 228, 371, 535
1 Pet. 3:21, 199
1 Pet. 4:3, 526
1 Pet. 4:4, 522
1 Pet. 4:8, 49, 71
1 Pet. 4:11, 196
1 Pet. 4:12-16, 472
1 Pet. 4:13-19, 474
1 Pet. 4:16, 171
1 Pet. 4:17-18, 161, 363
1 Pet. 4:18, 71
1 Pet. 5:5, 239, 269
1 Pet. 5:6, 279
1 Pet. 5:7, 112
1 Pet. 5:8, 197, 244, 408, 650
1 Pet. 5:13, 405

2 PETER

2 Pet. 1:3, 158, 226, 335, 573
2 Pet. 1:5-7, 285
2 Pet. 1:6, 456
2 Pet. 1:9, 105
2 Pet. 1:16-18, 621
2 Pet. 1:20-21, 7, 596
2 Pet. 1:21, 530
2 Pet. 2:9, 418
2 Pet. 2:14, 384, 397
2 Pet. 2:20-22, 108, 173
2 Pet. 2:22, 49, 71
2 Pet. 3:9, 317
2 Pet. 3:10, 93

2 Pet. 3:10ff, 249

2 Pet. 3:18, 634

1 JOHN

1 John 1:3, 471

1 John 1:7, 376, 471

1 John 1:8-10, 533

1 John 1:9, 191

1 John 2:1, 560

1 John 2:15-16, 233

1 John 2:15-17, 168, 265, 397,
473, 582

1 John 2:16, 401, 634

1 John 2:22, 533

1 John 2:25, 258

1 John 3:4, 107, 198-199

1 John 3:7, 610

1 John 3:12, 347, 540

1 John 3:15, 339

1 John 3:22, 612

1 John 4:7-8, 268, 642

1 John 4:8-10, 268

1 John 4:9, 624

1 John 4:16-19, 102

1 John 4:18, 26

1 John 4:20-21, 533

1 John 5:14-15, 361

3 JOHN

3 John 2, 284

3 John 9-10, 119

REVELATION

Rev. 1:3, 106

Rev. 2:7, 106

Rev. 2:10, 171, 175, 199, 373

Rev. 3:5, 373

Rev. 3:8, 300

Rev. 3:17, 118

Rev. 3:19, 117

Rev. 5:12, 47

Rev. 8:11, 421

Rev. 12:10, 343

Rev. 12:9, 17

Rev. 17:4, 396

Rev. 19:16, 625

Rev. 20:12, 400, 561

Rev. 20:14-15, 344

Rev. 21:4, 175

Rev. 21:8, 109, 199, 237, 246, 253,
437, 532, 627

Rev. 21:27, 494

Rev. 22:14, 211

Rev. 22:15, 387

Rev. 22:18-19, 114, 552, 579, 596

APPENDIX

A Topical Arrangement Of Proverbs

B. J. Clarke

Introduction

ON MANY OCCASIONS, WHILE reading the book of Proverbs, I have thought about how helpful it would be to have a written copy of all that Proverbs records on any one subject. For example, you can find excellent passages on the tongue scattered throughout the thirty-one chapters of the book. Wouldn't it be helpful to have all of those verses printed together for easy reference?

In the pages that follow you will find all of the verses of the book of Proverbs arranged together by topic. To accomplish this, I took the entire book of Proverbs (KJV) and pasted it from my Bible software program into a Microsoft Word document.

I then began going through Proverbs and cutting and pasting the verses into other documents arranged by category. I continued this process until every verse from Proverbs had been assigned to a category.

I assigned some verses to more than one category, although I am sure that I could have assigned some verses to even more categories (or subcategories) than I did.

Nevertheless, I hope that this arrangement of Proverbs will assist you in your devotional reading of the book, or in class/sermon preparation.

Abominations

Chapter 6

¹⁶These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: ¹⁷A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Chapter 11

¹A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight.

²⁰They that are of a froward heart *are* abomination to the LORD: but *such as are upright in their way are* his delight.

Chapter 15

⁸The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight. ⁹The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

²⁶The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD: but *the words of the pure are* pleasant words.

Chapter 16

⁵Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD: *though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.*

Chapter 17

¹⁵He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both *are* abomination to the LORD.

Chapter 20

¹⁰Divers weights, *and* divers measures, both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD.

²³Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance *is* not good.

Chapter 21

²⁷The sacrifice of the wicked *is* abomination: how much more, *when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?*

Chapter 24

⁹The thought of foolishness *is* sin: and the scorner *is* an abomination to men.

Chapter 26

²⁴He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; ²⁵When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for *there are seven abominations in his heart.*

Chapter 29

²⁷An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just: and *he that is upright in the way is* abomination to the wicked.

Anger/Wrath

Chapter 12

¹⁶A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent *man* covereth shame.

Chapter 14

¹⁷*He that is soon angry* dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

²⁹*He that is slow to wrath is* of great understanding: but *he that is hasty of spirit* exalteth folly.

Chapter 15

¹⁸A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but *he that is slow to anger* appeaseth strife.

Chapter 16

³²*He that is slow to anger is* better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

Chapter 18

¹⁹A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city: and *their contentions are* like the bars of a castle.

Chapter 19

¹¹The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and *it is* his glory to pass over a transgression. ¹²The king's wrath *is* as the roaring of a lion; but his favour *is* as dew upon the grass.

¹⁹A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver *him*, yet thou must do it again.

Chapter 21

¹⁴A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

Chapter 22

²⁴Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: ²⁵Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

Chapter 25

²³The north wind driveth away rain: so *doth* an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

²⁸He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city that *is* broken down, *and* without walls.

Chapter 27

³A stone *is* heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath *is* heavier than them both. ⁴Wrath *is* cruel, and anger *is* outrageous; but who *is* able to stand before envy?

Chapter 29

²²An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

Chapter 30

³³Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

Attributes Of God

Chapter 5

²¹For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

Chapter 15

³The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

¹¹Hell and destruction *are* before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

²⁵The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

²⁹The LORD *is* far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Chapter 16

¹The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD. ²All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

⁴The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

⁷When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

⁹A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

¹¹A just weight and balance *are* the LORD'S: all the weights of

the bag *are* his work.

³³The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD.

Chapter 17

³The fining pot *is* for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

Chapter 18

¹⁰The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and *is* safe.

Chapter 20

¹²The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.

²²Say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

²⁷The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Chapter 21

²Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

¹²The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked: *but God* overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness.

³⁰*There is* no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD. ³¹The horse *is* prepared against the day of battle: but safety *is* of the LORD.

Chapter 22

¹²The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

²²Rob not the poor, because he *is* poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: ²³For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

Chapter 23

¹⁰Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: ¹¹For their redeemer *is* mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Chapter 24

¹¹If thou forbear to deliver *them that are* drawn unto death, and *those that are* ready to be slain; ¹²If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it?* and he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it?* and shall *not* he render to *every* man according to his works?

²⁰For there shall be no reward to the evil *man*; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

Chapter 25

²*It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings *is* to search out a matter.

Chapter 26

¹⁰The great *God* that formed all *things* both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

Chapter 29

¹³The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes.

Chapter 30

⁵Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. ⁶Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Determining Right From Wrong

Chapter 18

¹³He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*, *it is* folly and shame unto him.

¹⁷*He that is* first in his own cause *seemeth* just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

Chapter 19

²¹*There are* many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Chapter 20

²⁴Man's goings *are* of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

Chapter 21

²Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

³⁰*There is* no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Chapter 24

²⁴He that saith unto the wicked, Thou *art* righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: ²⁵But to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

Chapter 28

¹¹The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

Discipline

Chapter 3

¹¹My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: ¹²For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

Chapter 13

²⁴He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Chapter 19

¹⁸Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Chapter 20

³⁰The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Chapter 22

¹⁵Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Chapter 23

¹³Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. ¹⁴Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

Chapter 29

¹⁵The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame.

¹⁷Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

¹⁹A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.

²¹He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become *his* son at the length.

The Fear Of The Lord

Chapter 9

¹⁰The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

Chapter 14

²He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but *he that is* perverse in his ways despiseth him.

²⁶In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence: and his children

shall have a place of refuge. ²⁷The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

Chapter 15

¹⁶Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

³³The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom; and before honour *is* humility.

Chapter 16

⁶By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil.

Chapter 19

²³The fear of the LORD *tendeth* to life; and *he that hath it* shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.

Chapter 22

⁴By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honour, and life.

Chapter 23

¹⁷Let not thine heart envy sinners; but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long. ¹⁸For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

Chapter 24

²¹My son, fear thou the LORD and the king; *and* meddle not with them that are given to change: ²²For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

Chapter 28

¹⁴Happy *is* the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

The Fool

Chapter 10

¹⁰He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow; but a prating fool shall fall.

²³*It is* as sport to a fool to do mischief; but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Chapter 11

²⁹He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind; and the fool *shall be* servant to the wise of heart.

Chapter 12

¹⁵The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.

¹⁶A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent *man* covereth shame.

Chapter 13

¹⁶Every prudent *man* dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open *his* folly.

¹⁹The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.

Chapter 14

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

⁷Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not *in him* the lips of knowledge.

⁸The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way: but the folly of fools *is* deceit. ⁹Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous *there is* favour.

¹⁵The simple believeth every word: but the prudent *man* looketh well to his going. ¹⁶A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. ¹⁷*He that is* soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

Chapter 15

⁵A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

¹⁴The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

Chapter 16

²²Understanding *is* a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools *is* folly.

Chapter 17

⁷Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

¹⁰A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

¹²Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

¹⁶Wherefore *is there* a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing *he hath* no heart to it?

²⁴Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth. ²⁵A foolish son *is* a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

²⁸Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: *and* he that shutteth his lips *is esteemed* a man of understanding.

Chapter 18

²A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

⁶A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. ⁷A fool's mouth *is* his destruction, and his lips *are* the snare of his soul.

¹³He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*, *it is* folly and shame unto him.

Chapter 19

¹Better *is* the poor that walketh in his integrity, than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

³The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

¹⁰Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

²⁹Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

Chapter 20

³*It is* an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

Chapter 23

⁹Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

Chapter 24

⁷Wisdom *is* too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

Chapter 26

¹As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.

³A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.

⁴Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. ⁵Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit. ⁶He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, *and* drinketh damage. ⁷The legs of the lame are not equal: so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools. ⁸As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so *is* he that giveth honour to a fool. ⁹As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools. ¹⁰The great *God* that formed all *things* both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

¹¹As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.

¹²Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him.

Chapter 27

³A stone *is* heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath *is* heavier than them both.

²²Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, *yet* will not his foolishness depart from him.

Chapter 28

²⁶He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Chapter 29

⁹*If* a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, *there is* no rest.

¹¹A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards.

Hatred Vs. Love

Chapter 10

¹²Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Chapter 15

¹⁷Better *is* a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Chapter 17

⁹He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends.

¹⁷A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Chapter 19

⁷All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth *them with* words, *yet* they are wanting *to him*.

Chapter 26

²⁴He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; ²⁵When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for *there are* seven abominations in his heart. ²⁶*Whose* hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the *whole* congregation.

Honesty

Chapter 11

¹A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight.

Chapter 12

¹⁷*He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.*

¹⁹The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment. ²⁰*Deceit is* in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace *is* joy.

²²Lying lips *are* abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly *are* his delight.

Chapter 13

⁵A righteous *man* hateth lying: but a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

²³Much food *is in* the tillage of the poor: but there is *that is* destroyed for want of judgment.

Chapter 14

⁵A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

²⁵A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful *witness* speaketh lies.

Chapter 16

¹¹A just weight and balance *are* the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag *are* his work.

Chapter 19

⁵A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall not escape.

⁹A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall perish.

²²The desire of a man *is* his kindness: and a poor man *is* better than a liar.

²⁸An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Chapter 20

⁷The just *man* walketh in his integrity: his children *are* blessed after him.

¹⁰Divers weights, *and* divers measures, both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD.

¹⁴*It is* naught, *it is* naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

¹⁷Bread of deceit *is* sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

²⁵*It is* a snare to the man *who* devoureth *that which is* holy, and after vows to make enquiry.

Chapter 21

⁶The getting of treasures by a lying tongue *is* a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

²⁸A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

Chapter 22

¹⁶He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches*, and he that giveth to the rich, *shall* surely come to want.

²⁸Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

Chapter 23

¹⁰Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: ¹¹For their redeemer *is* mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

Chapter 24

²⁶*Every man* shall kiss *his* lips that giveth a right answer.

²⁸Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive *not* with thy lips.

Chapter 25

¹⁴Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift *is like* clouds and wind without rain.

¹⁸A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour *is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Chapter 26

²⁴He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; ²⁵When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for *there are* seven abominations in his heart. ²⁶*Whose* hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the *whole* congregation.

²⁸A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

Chapter 27

⁵Open rebuke *is* better than secret love. ⁶Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.

Chapter 28

⁸He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

²¹To have respect of persons *is* not good: for for a piece of bread *that* man will transgress.

Chapter 29

⁵A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

²⁴Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth *it* not.

Chapter 30

⁸Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: ⁹Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

How We Should Treat Our Fellow Man

How we should treat our neighbors:

Chapter 3

²⁷Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*. ²⁸Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. ²⁹Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

Chapter 11

¹²He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

Chapter 16

²⁹A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way *that is* not good. ³⁰He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

Chapter 21

¹⁰The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

Chapter 24

²⁸Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive *not* with thy lips. ²⁹Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

Chapter 25

⁹Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*; and discover not a secret to another: ¹⁰Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

¹⁷Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and *so* hate thee. ¹⁸A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour *is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Chapter 26

¹⁸As a mad *man* who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, ¹⁹*So is* the man *that* deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

Chapter 29

⁵A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

How we should treat the poor:

Chapter 3

²⁷Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*. ²⁸Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

Chapter 11

²⁴There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty. ²⁵The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. ²⁶He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that selleth *it*.

Chapter 13

²³Much food *is in* the tillage of the poor: but there is *that is* destroyed for want of judgment.

Chapter 14

²⁰The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich *hath* many friends.

²¹He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy *is* he.

³¹He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

Chapter 17

⁵Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: *and* he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

Chapter 18

²³The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

Chapter 19

⁷All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth *them with* words, *yet they are wanting to him*.

¹⁷He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Chapter 21

¹³Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

²⁶He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Chapter 20

¹⁹He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Chapter 25

²⁰*As* he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, *and as* vinegar upon nitre, so *is* he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

Chapter 27

⁵Open rebuke *is* better than secret love. ⁶Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.

⁹Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. ¹⁰Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: *for better is* a neighbour *that is* near than a brother far off.

¹⁴He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

¹⁷Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Chapter 28

²³He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

How we should treat our enemies:

Chapter 20

²²Say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Chapter 24

¹⁷Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: ¹⁸Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

²⁸Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive *not* with thy lips. ²⁹Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

Chapter 25

²¹If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: ²²For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

Humility vs. Pride

Chapter 3

⁵Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and

he shall direct thy paths. ⁷Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

³⁴Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

Chapter 11

²When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly *is* wisdom.

¹⁷The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh.

Chapter 13

¹⁰Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom.

Chapter 14

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

Chapter 15

²⁵The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

³³The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom; and before honour *is* humility.

Chapter 16

⁵Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD: *though* hand *join* in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Chapter 18

¹¹The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit. ¹²Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour *is* humility.

Chapter 20

¹⁸Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

Chapter 21

⁴An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin.

²⁴Proud *and* haughty scorner *is* his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.

Chapter 22

⁴By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honour, and life.

¹⁸Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. ¹⁹Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Chapter 25

⁶Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great *men*:

⁷For better *it is* that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

²⁷*It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.*

Chapter 26

¹²Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him.

Chapter 27

¹Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. ²Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Chapter 28

¹¹The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

¹³He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.

²⁵He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

Chapter 29

²³A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Chapter 30

³²If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth.

The Immoral Woman**Chapter 2**

¹⁶To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger which flattereth with her words; ¹⁷Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. ¹⁸For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. ¹⁹None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

Chapter 5

¹My son, attend unto my wisdom, *and* bow thine ear to my understanding; ²That thou mayest regard discretion, and *that* thy lips may keep knowledge. ³For the lips of a strange woman

drop *as* an honeycomb, and her mouth *is* smoother than oil: ⁴But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two edged sword. ⁵Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. ⁶Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, *that* thou canst not know *them*. ⁷Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. ⁸Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: ⁹Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: ¹⁰Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours *be* in the house of a stranger; ¹¹And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, ¹²And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; ¹³And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! ¹⁴I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly. ¹⁵Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. ¹⁶Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, *and* rivers of waters in the streets. ¹⁷Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. ¹⁸Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. ¹⁹*Let her be as* the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. ²⁰And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? ²¹For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. ²²His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. ²³He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Chapter 6

²³For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light; and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life: ²⁴To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. ²⁵Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. ²⁶For by means of a whorish woman *a man is brought* to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. ²⁷Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? ²⁸Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? ²⁹So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. ³⁰*Men* do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; ³¹But *if* he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. ³²*But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul. ³³A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. ³⁴For jealousy *is* the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. ³⁵He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

Chapter 7

¹My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. ²Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. ³Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. ⁴Say unto wisdom, Thou *art* my sister; and call understanding *thy* kinswoman: ⁵That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words. ⁶For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, ⁷And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, ⁸Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, ⁹In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: ¹⁰And, behold, there met him a woman *with* the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. ¹¹(She *is* loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: ¹²Now *is she* without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) ¹³So she caught him, and kissed him, *and* with an impudent face said unto him, ¹⁴*I have* peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. ¹⁵Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. ¹⁶I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved *works*, with fine linen of Egypt. ¹⁷I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. ¹⁸Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us solace ourselves with loves. ¹⁹For the goodman *is* not at home, he is gone a long journey: ²⁰He hath taken a bag of money with him, *and* will come home at the day appointed. ²¹With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. ²²He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; ²³Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it *is* for his life. ²⁴Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. ²⁵Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. ²⁶For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her. ²⁷Her house *is* the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

Chapter 9

¹³A foolish woman *is* clamorous: *she is* simple, and knoweth nothing. ¹⁴For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, ¹⁵To call passengers who go right on their ways: ¹⁶Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: *and as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, ¹⁷Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant. ¹⁸But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there; *and that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.

Chapter 22

¹⁴The mouth of strange women *is* a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

Chapter 23

²⁶My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. ²⁷For a whore *is* a deep ditch; and a strange woman *is* a narrow pit. ²⁸She also lieth in wait as *for* a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

Chapter 30

²⁰Such *is* the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

Introduction To Proverbs**Chapter 1**

¹The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; ²To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; ³To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; ⁴To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. ⁵A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: ⁶To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. ⁷The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Chapter 25

¹These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

Chapter 31

¹The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. ²What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?

Kings And Rulers**Chapter 14**

²⁸In the multitude of people *is* the king's honour: but in the want of people *is* the destruction of the prince.

³⁴Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people. ³⁵The king's favour *is* toward a wise servant: but his wrath *is against* him that causeth shame.

Chapter 16

⁸Better *is* a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

¹⁰A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

¹²*It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.

¹³Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right. ¹⁴The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it. ¹⁵In the light of the king's countenance *is* life; and his favour *is* as a cloud of the latter rain.

Chapter 17

⁷Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

²⁶Also to punish the just *is* not good, *nor* to strike princes for equity.

Chapter 18

⁵*It is* not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

Chapter 19

⁶Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man *is* a friend to him that giveth gifts.

¹⁰Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

¹²The king's wrath *is* as the roaring of a lion; but his favour *is* as dew upon the grass.

Chapter 20

²The fear of a king *is* as the roaring of a lion: *whoso* provoketh him to anger sinneth *against* his own soul.

⁸A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

²⁶A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

²⁸Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.

Chapter 21

¹The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Chapter 22

¹¹He that loveth pureness of heart, *for* the grace of his lips the king *shall be* his friend.

Chapter 23

¹When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what *is* before thee: ²And put a knife to thy throat, if thou *be* a man

given to appetite. ³Be not desirous of his dainties: for they *are* deceitful meat.

Chapter 24

²¹My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: *and* meddle not with them that are given to change: ²²For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

²⁴He that saith unto the wicked, Thou *art* righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: ²⁵But to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

Chapter 25

²*It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings *is* to search out a matter. ³The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings *is* unsearchable. ⁴Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. ⁵Take away the wicked *from* before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness. ⁶Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great *men*: ⁷For better *it is* that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

¹⁵By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

Chapter 28

²For the transgression of a land many *are* the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding *and* knowledge the state *thereof* shall be prolonged.

¹²When righteous *men* do rejoice, *there is* great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

¹⁵As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; *so is* a wicked ruler over the poor people. ¹⁶The prince that wanteth understanding *is* also a great oppressor: *but* he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his* days.

²⁸When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.

Chapter 29

²When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

⁴The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

⁸Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise *men* turn away wrath.

¹²If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants *are* wicked.

¹⁴The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.

¹⁶When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

²⁶Many seek the ruler's favour; but *every* man's judgment cometh from the LORD.

Chapter 31

³Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. ⁴*It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: ⁵Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. ⁶Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. ⁷Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. ⁸Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. ⁹Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Laziness Vs. Diligence

Chapter 6

⁶Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: ⁷Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, ⁸Provideth her meat in the summer, *and* gathereth her food in the harvest. ⁹How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? ¹⁰*Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: ¹¹So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Chapter 10

⁴He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. ⁵He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son: *but* he that sleepeth in harvest *is* a son that causeth shame. ²⁶As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so *is* the sluggard to them that send him.

Chapter 12

¹¹He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain *persons is* void of understanding. ²⁴The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute. ²⁷The slothful *man* roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man *is* precious.

Chapter 13

⁴The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. ¹¹Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

Chapter 14

²³In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury.

Chapter 15

¹⁹The way of the slothful *man is* as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous *is* made plain.

Chapter 16

²⁶He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

Chapter 18

⁹He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

Chapter 19

¹⁵Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

²⁴A slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

Chapter 20

⁴The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; *therefore* shall he beg in harvest, and *have* nothing.

¹³Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, *and* thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

Chapter 21

⁵The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to plenteousness; but of every one *that is* hasty only to want.

²⁵The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. ²⁶He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Chapter 22

¹³The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.

²⁹Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean *men*.

Chapter 24

³⁰I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; ³¹And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, *and* nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. ³²Then I saw, *and* considered *it* well: I looked upon *it*, *and* received instruction. ³³*Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: ³⁴So shall

thy poverty come *as* one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.

Chapter 26

¹³The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion in the way; a lion *is* in the streets. ¹⁴*As* the door turneth upon his hinges, so *doth* the slothful upon his bed. ¹⁵The slothful hideth his hand in *his* bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. ¹⁶The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Chapter 27

¹⁸Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

²³Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds. ²⁴For riches *are* not for ever: and doth the crown *endure* to every generation? ²⁵The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. ²⁶The lambs *are* for thy clothing, and the goats *are* the price of the field. ²⁷And *thou shalt have* goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and *for* the maintenance for thy maidens.

Chapter 28

¹⁹He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough.

The Merry Heart

Chapter 12

²⁰Deceit *is* in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace *is* joy.

Chapter 13

¹²Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life.

Chapter 15

¹³A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

¹⁵All the days of the afflicted *are* evil: but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast.

³⁰The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: *and* a good report maketh the bones fat.

Chapter 17

²²A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Chapter 18

¹⁴The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

Chapter 21

¹⁵*It is* joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.

Chapter 23

¹⁵My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. ¹⁶Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things. ²⁴The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him. ²⁵Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.

Chapter 27

⁹Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

Chapter 28

¹⁴Happy *is* the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

Chapter 29

¹⁸Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

Miscellaneous Proverbs

Chapter 14

⁴Where no oxen *are*, the crib *is* clean: but much increase *is* by the strength of the ox.

¹⁰The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

¹³Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth *is* heaviness.

Chapter 18

¹⁸The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

Chapter 20

⁵Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out. ⁶Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

⁹Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

²⁹The glory of young men *is* their strength: and the beauty of old men *is* the gray head.

Chapter 21

³To do justice and judgment *is* more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Chapter 22

²⁸Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

Chapter 24

¹⁰*If* thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength *is* small.

²⁷Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

Chapter 25

¹³As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, *so is* a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

¹⁶Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

¹⁹Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble *is like* a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint. ²⁰*As* he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, *and as* vinegar upon nitre, *so is* he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

Chapter 26

²As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

²⁷Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

Chapter 27

⁷The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

¹⁹As in water face *answereth* to face, so the heart of man to man.

²¹As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so *is* a man to his praise.

Chapter 29

¹⁹A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.

²¹He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become *his* son at the length.

Money

Chapter 3

⁹Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: ¹⁰So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Chapter 6

¹My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, *if* thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, ²Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. ³Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. ⁴Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. ⁵Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand *of the hunter*, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Chapter 10

¹⁵The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city: the destruction of the poor *is* their poverty.

Chapter 11

⁴Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

¹⁵He that is surety for a stranger shall smart *for it*: and he that hateth suretiship is sure. ¹⁶A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong *men* retain riches.

²⁸He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Chapter 13

⁷There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing: *there is* that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches. ⁸The ransom of a man's life *are* his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.

¹¹Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

²²A good *man* leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner *is* laid up for the just.

Chapter 15

⁶In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked *is* trouble.

¹⁶Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

²⁷He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

Chapter 16

⁸Better *is* a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

Chapter 17

⁸A gift *is as* a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

¹⁸A man void of understanding striketh hands, *and* becometh

surety in the presence of his friend.

²³A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

Chapter 18

¹¹The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

¹⁶A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

²³The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

Chapter 19

⁴Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

⁶Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man *is* a friend to him that giveth gifts.

¹⁷He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Chapter 20

¹⁶Take his garment that is surety *for* a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

²¹An inheritance *may be* gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Chapter 21

⁶The getting of treasures by a lying tongue *is* a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

¹³Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. ¹⁴A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

¹⁷He that loveth pleasure *shall be* a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

²⁰*There is* treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

²⁶He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Chapter 22

¹A *good* name *is* rather to be chosen than great riches, *and* loving favour rather than silver and gold. ²The rich and poor meet together: the LORD *is* the maker of them all.

⁷The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower *is* servant to the lender.

⁹He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

¹⁶He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches*, *and* he that giveth to the rich, *shall* surely *come* to want.

²⁶Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, *or* of them that are

sureties for debts. ²⁷If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

Chapter 23

⁴Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. ⁵Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. ⁶Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: ⁷For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart *is* not with thee. ⁸The morsel *which* thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

Chapter 27

¹³Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

¹⁸Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

²⁰Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Chapter 28

⁶Better *is* the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than *he that is* perverse *in his* ways, though he *be* rich.

⁸He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

¹¹The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

¹⁶The prince that wanteth understanding *is* also a great oppressor: *but* he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his* days.

²⁰A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

²²He that hasteth to be rich *hath* an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

²⁷He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Chapter 30

⁸Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: ⁹Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

Proverbs For Husbands And Wives

Chapter 5

¹⁵Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. ¹⁶Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, *and*

rivers of waters in the streets. ¹⁷Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. ¹⁸Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. ¹⁹*Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.*

Chapter 15

¹⁷*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.*

Chapter 17

¹*Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.*

Chapter 18

²²*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.*

Chapter 19

¹³A foolish son *is* the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dropping. ¹⁴House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife *is* from the LORD.

Chapter 21

⁹*It is* better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

¹⁹*It is* better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

Chapter 24

³Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: ⁴And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

Chapter 25

²⁴*It is* better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.

Chapter 27

⁸As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so *is* a man that wandereth from his place.

¹⁵A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. ¹⁶Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, *which* bewrayeth *itself*.

Proverbs For Parents

Chapter 3

¹¹My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: ¹²For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

Chapter 13

²⁴He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Chapter 19

¹⁸Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Chapter 20

⁷The just *man* walketh in his integrity: his children *are* blessed after him.

¹¹Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right.

³⁰The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Chapter 22

⁶Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

¹⁵Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Chapter 23

¹³Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. ¹⁴Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

²⁴The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him.

Chapter 24

³Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: ⁴And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

Chapter 29

¹⁵The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame.

¹⁷Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Proverbs For Youth: “Listen To Your Parents”

Chapter 1

⁸My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: ⁹For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

Chapter 3

¹My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: ²For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. ³Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: ⁴So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. ⁵Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. ⁷Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. ⁸It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

¹¹My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: ¹²For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

²¹My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: ²²So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. ²³Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. ²⁴When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. ²⁵Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. ²⁶For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Chapter 4

¹⁰Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. ¹¹I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. ¹²When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. ¹³Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go: keep her; for she *is* thy life.

²⁰My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

²¹Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. ²²For they *are* life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. ²³Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life. ²⁴Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. ²⁵Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. ²⁶Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. ²⁷Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Chapter 6

²⁰My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: ²¹Bind them continually upon thine heart, *and* tie them about thy neck. ²²When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. ²³For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light; and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life:

Chapter 7

¹My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. ²Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. ³Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. ⁴Say unto wisdom, Thou *art* my sister; and call understanding *thy* kinswoman: ⁵That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words.

Chapter 10

¹The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother.

Chapter 13

¹A wise son *heareth* his father's instruction: but a scorner *heareth* not rebuke.

Chapter 15

⁵A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

²⁰A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Chapter 17

²A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

²⁵A foolish son *is* a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

Chapter 19

¹³A foolish son *is* the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dropping.

²⁶He that wasteth *his* father, *and* chaseth away *his* mother, *is* a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach. ²⁷Cease, my son, to hear the instruction *that causeth* to err from the words of knowledge.

Chapter 20

¹¹Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right.

²⁰Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Chapter 23

¹⁵My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. ¹⁶Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.

²²Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

²⁴The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him. ²⁵Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.

Chapter 24

²¹My son, fear thou the LORD and the king; *and* meddle not with them that are given to change: ²²For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

Chapter 27

¹¹My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

Chapter 28

²⁴Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, *It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.*

Chapter 30

¹⁷The eye *that* mocketh at *his* father, and despiseth to obey *his* mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

Proverbs For Youth: “Watch Your Companionships”

Chapter 1

¹⁰My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. ¹¹If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: ¹²Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: ¹³We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: ¹⁴Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: ¹⁵My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: ¹⁶For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. ¹⁷Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. ¹⁸And they lay wait for their *own* blood; they lurk privily for their *own* lives. ¹⁹So *are* the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; *which* taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Chapter 2

¹⁰When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; ¹¹Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: ¹²To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things; ¹³Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴Who rejoice to do evil, *and* delight in the frowardness of the wicked; ¹⁵Whose ways *are* crooked, and *they* froward in their paths: ¹⁶To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words; ¹⁷Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. ¹⁸For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. ¹⁹None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. ²⁰That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men*, and keep the paths of the righteous.

Chapter 3

³¹Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

Chapter 4

¹⁴Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*. ¹⁵Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. ¹⁶For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause *some* to fall. ¹⁷For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. ¹⁸But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. ¹⁹The way of the wicked *is* as darkness: they know not at what they stumble. ²⁰My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. ²¹Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. ²²For they *are* life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. ²³Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life. ²⁴Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. ²⁵Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. ²⁶Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. ²⁷Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Chapter 13

²⁰He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Chapter 14

⁷Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not *in him* the lips of knowledge.

Chapter 21

¹⁶The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Chapter 23

¹⁷Let not thine heart envy sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long. ¹⁸For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off. ¹⁹Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. ²⁰Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: ²¹For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe *a man* with rags. ²²Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. ²³Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Chapter 24

¹Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. ²For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

¹⁹Fret not thyself because of evil *men*, neither be thou envious at the wicked; ²⁰For there shall be no reward to the evil *man*; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

Chapter 25

²⁶A righteous man falling down before the wicked *is as* a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

Chapter 28

⁷Whoso keepeth the law *is* a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous *men* shameth his father.

Chapter 29

³Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance.

Receiving Instruction Vs. Rejecting Reproof**Chapter 9**

⁷He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked *man* *getteth* himself a blot. ⁸Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. ⁹Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.

Chapter 10

⁸The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

¹⁷He *is in* the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.

Chapter 11

¹⁴Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

Chapter 12

¹Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof *is* brutish.

¹⁵The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.

Chapter 13

¹A wise son *heareth* his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

¹⁰Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom.

¹³Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

¹⁸Poverty and shame *shall be to* him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

Chapter 14

⁶A scorner seeketh wisdom, and *findeth it* not: but knowledge *is* easy unto him that understandeth.

Chapter 15

⁵A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof *is* prudent.

¹⁰Correction *is* grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: *and* he that hateth reproof shall die.

¹²A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.

²²Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

³¹The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. ³²He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. ³³The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom; and before honour *is* humility.

Chapter 16

²¹The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning. ²²Understanding *is* a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools *is* folly.

²³The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

Chapter 17

¹⁰A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

Chapter 18

¹⁵The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Chapter 19

¹⁶He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; *but* he that despiseth his ways shall die.

²⁰Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

²⁵Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, *and* he will understand knowledge.

²⁷Cease, my son, to hear the instruction *that causeth* to err from the words of knowledge.

Chapter 20

¹⁸*Every* purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

Chapter 21

¹¹When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

Chapter 22

¹⁰Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

¹⁷Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. ¹⁸For *it is* a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. ¹⁹That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee. ²⁰Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, ²¹That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Chapter 23

⁹Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

¹²Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.

²³Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Chapter 24

⁵A wise man *is* strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength. ⁶For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

Chapter 25

¹²As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is* a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear.

Chapter 28

⁴They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them. ⁵Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all *things*.

⁹He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination.

¹⁴Happy *is* the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

²³He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Chapter 29

¹He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

¹⁸Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

Reward Vs. Punishment**Chapter 2**

²¹For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. ²²But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

Chapter 3

³²For the froward *is* abomination to the LORD: but his secret *is* with the righteous. ³³The curse of the LORD *is* in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

³⁵The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

Chapter 6

¹⁵Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

Chapter 10

²Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. ³The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

⁶Blessings *are* upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. ⁷The memory of the just *is* blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

¹⁶The labour of the righteous *tendeth* to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

²²The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

²⁴The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire

of the righteous shall be granted. ²⁵As the whirlwind passeth, so *is* the wicked no *more*: but the righteous *is* an everlasting foundation.

²⁷The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. ²⁸The hope of the righteous *shall be* gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

²⁹The way of the LORD *is* strength to the upright: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity. ³⁰The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

Chapter 11

¹⁸The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward. ¹⁹As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death.

²¹*Though* hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

²³The desire of the righteous *is* only good: *but* the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath.

Chapter 12

⁷The wicked are overthrown, and *are* not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.

²⁸In the way of righteousness *is* life; and *in* the pathway *thereof* *there is* no death.

Chapter 13

⁹The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

¹⁴The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

¹⁵Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors *is* hard.

²¹Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.

Chapter 14

¹¹The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

¹⁴The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself.

²⁴The crown of the wise *is* their riches: *but* the foolishness of fools *is* folly.

³²The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Chapter 15

⁶In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked *is* trouble.

²⁴The way of life *is* above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

Chapter 16

⁴The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

⁵Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD: *though* hand *join* in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

¹⁷The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

²⁰He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he.

Chapter 17

⁵Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: *and* he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

¹¹An evil *man* seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

¹³Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

²⁶Also to punish the just *is* not good, *nor* to strike princes for equity.

Chapter 18

³When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

Chapter 19

⁵A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall not escape.

⁹A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall perish.

²⁹Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

Chapter 21

¹²The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked: *but* God overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness.

¹⁶The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

²¹He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

Chapter 22

⁸He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

Chapter 23

¹⁷Let not thine heart envy sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long. ¹⁸For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

Chapter 24

¹³My son, eat thou honey, because *it is good*; and the honeycomb, *which is sweet* to thy taste: ¹⁴So *shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* unto thy soul: when thou hast found *it*, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

¹⁶For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

²⁰For there shall be no reward to the evil *man*; the candle of the wicked shall be put out. ²¹My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: *and* meddle not with them that are given to change: ²²For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

Chapter 25

²¹If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: ²²For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

Chapter 26

¹⁰The great *God* that formed all *things* both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

²⁷Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

Chapter 28

¹⁰Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good *things* in possession.

¹⁸Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but *he that is* perverse *in his* ways shall fall at once.

²⁰A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

Chapter 29

⁶In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

¹⁶When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

The Righteous Man

Chapter 10

²Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. ³The LORD will not suffer the soul of the

righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

⁹He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

¹⁶The labour of the righteous *tendeth* to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

²⁴The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. ²⁵As the whirlwind passeth, so *is* the wicked no *more*: but the righteous *is* an everlasting foundation.

²⁷The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. ²⁸The hope of the righteous *shall be* gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish. ²⁹The way of the LORD *is* strength to the upright: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity. ³⁰The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

Chapter 11

³The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

⁵The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. ⁶The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in *their own* naughtiness. ⁷When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust *men* perisheth.

⁸The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

¹⁰When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, *there is* shouting. ¹¹By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

¹⁸The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward. ¹⁹As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death.

²³The desire of the righteous *is* only good: *but* the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath.

³⁰The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise. ³¹Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

Chapter 12

²A good *man* obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn. ³A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

⁵The thoughts of the righteous *are* right: *but* the counsels of the wicked *are* deceit.

⁷The wicked *are* overthrown, and *are* not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.

¹⁰A righteous *man* regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked *are* cruel.

¹²The wicked desireth the net of evil *men*: but the root of the righteous yieldeth *fruit*. ¹³The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

²¹There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

²⁶The righteous *is* more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

²⁸In the way of righteousness *is* life; and *in* the pathway *thereof* *there is* no death.

Chapter 13

⁵A righteous *man* hateth lying: but a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame. ⁶Righteousness keepeth *him* *that is* upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

⁹The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

²²A good *man* leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner *is* laid up for the just.

²⁵The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.

Chapter 14

²He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but *he that is* perverse in his ways despiseth him.

¹¹The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

¹⁴The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself.

¹⁹The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

³²The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Chapter 15

⁶In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked *is* trouble.

⁸The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight. ⁹The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

²⁸The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things. ²⁹The LORD *is* far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Chapter 16

⁸Better *is* a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

¹⁷The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

³¹The hoary head *is* a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness.

Chapter 21

⁸The way of man *is* froward and strange: but *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.

¹²The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but *God* overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness.

¹⁵*It is* joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.

¹⁸The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

²¹He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

²⁹A wicked man hardeneth his face: but *as for* the upright, he directeth his way.

Chapter 22

⁵Thorns and snares *are* in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

Chapter 24

¹⁵Lay not wait, O wicked *man*, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place: ¹⁶For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

²⁴He that saith unto the wicked, Thou *art* righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: ²⁵But to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

Chapter 25

²⁶A righteous man falling down before the wicked *is as* a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

Chapter 28

¹The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

⁴They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them. ⁵Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all *things*.

¹⁰Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good *things* in possession.

¹⁸Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but *he that is* perverse *in his ways* shall fall at once.

Chapter 29

⁶In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

⁷The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: *but* the wicked regardeth not to know *it*.

¹⁰The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.

¹⁶When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

²⁷An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just: and *he that is* upright in the way *is* abomination to the wicked.

The Sayings Of Agur

Chapter 30

¹The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *even* the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal, ²Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man. ³I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. ⁴Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou canst tell?

⁵Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. ⁶Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. ⁷Two *things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die: ⁸Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: ⁹Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

¹⁰Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty. ¹¹*There is* a generation *that* curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. ¹²*There is* a generation *that are* pure in their own eyes, and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness. ¹³*There is* a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. ¹⁴*There is* a generation, whose teeth *are as* swords, and their jaw teeth *as* knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from *among* men. ¹⁵The horseleach hath two daughters, *crying*, Give, give. There are three *things that* are never satisfied, *yea*, four *things* say not, *It is* enough: ¹⁶The grave; and the barren womb; the earth *that is* not filled with water; and the fire *that* saith not, *It is* enough. ¹⁷The eye *that* mocketh at *his* father, and despiseth to obey *his* mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. ¹⁸There be three *things which* are too wonderful for me, *yea*, four which I know not: ¹⁹The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.

²⁰Such *is* the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth

her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. ²¹For three *things* the earth is disquieted, and for four *which* it cannot bear: ²²For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat; ²³For an odious *woman* when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress. ²⁴There be four *things which are* little upon the earth, but they *are* exceeding wise: ²⁵The ants *are* a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; ²⁶The conies *are but* a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; ²⁷The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; ²⁸The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces. ²⁹There be three *things* which go well, yea, four are comely in going: ³⁰A lion *which is* strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any; ³¹A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom *there is* no rising up. ³²If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth. ³³Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

The Tongue In Proverbs: How Not To Use It

Chapter 6

¹²A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.

Chapter 11

⁹An hypocrite with *his* mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

¹³A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Chapter 12

¹⁷*He that* speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.

¹⁹The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment.

²²Lying lips *are* abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly *are* his delight.

Chapter 13

³He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Chapter 14

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

²⁵A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful *witness* speaketh lies.

Chapter 15

¹A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

²⁸The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Chapter 17

⁴A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; *and* a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

⁷Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

²⁰He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

²⁷He that hath knowledge spareth his words: *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. ²⁸Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: *and* he that shutteth his lips *is esteemed* a man of understanding.

Chapter 18

⁶A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. ⁷A fool's mouth *is* his destruction, and his lips *are* the snare of his soul. ⁸The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

¹³He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*, *it is* folly and shame unto him.

Chapter 19

¹Better *is* the poor that walketh in his integrity, than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

⁵A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall not escape.

⁹A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall perish.

Chapter 20

¹⁹He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Chapter 21

⁶The getting of treasures by a lying tongue *is* a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

²³Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

Chapter 23

⁹Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

Chapter 24

²For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

Chapter 25

⁹Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*; and discover not a secret to another: ¹⁰Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

¹⁴Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift *is like* clouds and wind without rain.

¹⁸A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour *is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

²³The north wind driveth away rain: so *doth* an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

Chapter 26

²⁰Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. ²¹*As* coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire; so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife. ²²The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. ²³Burning lips and a wicked heart

are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. ²⁴He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; ²⁵When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for *there are* seven abominations in his heart. ²⁶*Whose* hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the *whole* congregation.

²⁸A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

Chapter 29

⁵A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

¹¹A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards.

²⁰Seest thou a man *that is* hasty in his words? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him.

The Tongue In Proverbs: How To Use It**Chapter 10**

¹¹The mouth of a righteous *man is* a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

¹³In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod *is* for the back of him that is void of understanding.

¹⁴Wise *men* lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction.

²⁰The tongue of the just *is as* choice silver: the heart of the wicked *is* little worth. ²¹The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

³¹The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. ³²The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked *speaketh* frowardness.

Chapter 12

⁶The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

¹³The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips: but the just shall come out of trouble. ¹⁴A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

¹⁸There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise *is* health.

²⁵Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

Chapter 13

²A man shall eat good by the fruit of *his* mouth: but the soul of the transgressors *shall eat* violence.

Chapter 15

¹A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. ²The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

⁴A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life: but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit.

⁷The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.

²³A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word *spoken* in due season, how good *is it!*

²⁶The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD: but *the words* of the pure *are* pleasant words.

Chapter 16

²⁴Pleasant words *are as* an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

Chapter 18

⁴The words of a man's mouth *are as* deep waters, *and* the wellspring of wisdom *as* a flowing brook.

²⁰A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; *and* with the increase of his lips shall he be filled. ²¹Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Chapter 20

¹⁵There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge *are* a precious jewel.

Chapter 22

¹¹He that loveth pureness of heart, *for* the grace of his lips the king *shall be* his friend.

Chapter 23

¹⁶Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.

Chapter 24

²⁶*Every man* shall kiss *his* lips that giveth a right answer.

Chapter 25

¹¹A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver.

¹⁵By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

²⁵*As* cold waters to a thirsty soul, *so is* good news from a far country.

Chapter 27

⁹Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: *so doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

Chapter 28

²³He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Trust In God Vs. Trust In Self/Man

Chapter 3

⁵Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. ⁷Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

Chapter 14

¹²There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

Chapter 16

¹The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD. ²All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. ³Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

⁹A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

²⁰He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he.

²⁵There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

Chapter 18

²A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

Chapter 19

²¹*There are* many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Chapter 20

²²Say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

²⁴Man's goings *are* of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

Chapter 21

³⁰*There is* no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Chapter 22

¹⁷Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. ¹⁸For *it is* a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. ¹⁹That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.

Chapter 28

²⁵He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat. ²⁶He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Chapter 29

²⁵The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

The Wicked Man

Chapter 5

²²His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. ²³He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Chapter 6

¹²A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. ¹³He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; ¹⁴Frowardness *is* in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. ¹⁵Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

Chapter 10

⁶Blessings *are* upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. ⁷The memory of the just *is* blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Chapter 11

⁷When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust *men* perisheth.

Chapter 12

¹²The wicked desireth the net of evil *men*: but the root of the righteous yieldeth *fruit*. ¹³The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

Chapter 13

¹⁷A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador *is* health.

Chapter 15

⁸The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight. ⁹The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

Chapter 16

²⁷An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips *there is* as a burning fire. ²⁸A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends. ²⁹A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way *that is* not good. ³⁰He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

Chapter 17

⁴A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; *and* a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

¹¹An evil *man* seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

²³A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

Chapter 18

³When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

Chapter 19

²⁸An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Chapter 21

⁷The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment. ⁸The way of man *is* froward and strange: but *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.

¹⁰The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

²⁷The sacrifice of the wicked *is* abomination: how much more, *when* he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

²⁹A wicked man hardeneth his face: but *as for* the upright, he directeth his way.

Chapter 22

⁵Thorns *and* snares *are* in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

Chapter 24

⁸He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.

⁹The thought of foolishness *is* sin: and the scorner *is* an abomination to men.

¹⁵Lay not wait, O wicked *man*, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place: ¹⁶For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

²⁰For there shall be no reward to the evil *man*; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

Chapter 28

¹The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

Wine**Chapter 20**

¹Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Chapter 23

²⁰Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: ²¹For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe *a man* with rags.

²⁹Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? ³⁰They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. ³¹Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. ³²At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. ³³Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. ³⁴Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. ³⁵They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not sick; they have

beaten me, *and* I felt *it* not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Chapter 31

⁴*It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: ⁵Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. ⁶Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. ⁷Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

Wisdom

Chapter 1

¹Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: ²¹She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*, ²²How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? ²³Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. ²⁴Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; ²⁵But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: ²⁶I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; ²⁷When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. ²⁸Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: ²⁹For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: ³⁰They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. ³¹Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. ³²For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. ³³But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Chapter 2

¹My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; ²So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding; ³Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding; ⁴If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures; ⁵Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. ⁶For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding. ⁷He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly. ⁸He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. ⁹Then shalt thou

understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path. ¹⁰When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; ¹¹Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: ¹²To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things; ¹³Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴Who rejoice to do evil, *and* delight in the frowardness of the wicked; ¹⁵Whose ways *are* crooked, and *they* froward in their paths: ¹⁶To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words; ¹⁷Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. ¹⁸For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. ¹⁹None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life. ²⁰That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men*, and keep the paths of the righteous. ²¹For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. ²²But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

Chapter 3

¹³Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding. ¹⁴For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. ¹⁵She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. ¹⁶Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honour. ¹⁷Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace. ¹⁸She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy *is* every one that retaineth her. ¹⁹The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. ²⁰By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew. ²¹My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: ²²So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. ²³Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. ²⁴When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: *yea*, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. ²⁵Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. ²⁶For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Chapter 4

¹Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. ²For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. ³For I was my father's son, tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother. ⁴He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. ⁵Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. ⁶Forsake her not, and she shall

preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. ⁷Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. ⁸Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. ⁹She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Chapter 7

¹My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. ²Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. ³Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. ⁴Say unto wisdom, Thou *art* my sister; and call understanding *thy* kinswoman: ⁵That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words.

Chapter 8

¹Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? ²She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. ³She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. ⁴Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice *is* to the sons of man. ⁵O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. ⁶Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips *shall be* right things. ⁷For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips. ⁸All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness; *there is* nothing forward or perverse in them. ⁹They *are* all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. ¹⁰Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. ¹¹For wisdom *is* better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. ¹²I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. ¹³The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. ¹⁴Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom: I *am* understanding; I have strength. ¹⁵By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. ¹⁶By me princes rule, and nobles, *even* all the judges of the earth. ¹⁷I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. ¹⁸Riches and honour *are* with me; *yea*, durable riches and righteousness. ¹⁹My fruit *is* better than gold, *yea*, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. ²⁰I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: ²¹That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures. ²²The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. ²³I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. ²⁴When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. ²⁵Before the

mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: ²⁶While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. ²⁷When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: ²⁸When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: ²⁹When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: ³⁰Then I was by him, *as* one brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him; ³¹Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men. ³²Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed *are they that* keep my ways. ³³Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. ³⁴Blessed *is* the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. ³⁵For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. ³⁶But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

Chapter 9

¹Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: ²She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. ³She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, ⁴Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, ⁵Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine *which* I have mingled. ⁶Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding. ⁷He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked *man* *getteth* himself a blot. ⁸Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. ⁹Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning. ¹⁰The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding. ¹¹For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. ¹²If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*. ¹³A foolish woman *is* clamorous: *she is* simple, and knoweth nothing. ¹⁴For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, ¹⁵To call passengers who go right on their ways: ¹⁶Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: and *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, ¹⁷Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret *is* pleasant. ¹⁸But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there; and *that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.

Chapter 16

¹⁶How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

Chapter 17

¹⁶Wherefore *is there* a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing *he hath* no heart to it?

²⁴Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth.

Chapter 18

¹Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh *and* intermeddleth with all wisdom. ²A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

Chapter 19

²Also, *that* the soul *be* without knowledge, *it is* not good; and he that hasteth with *his* feet sinneth.

⁸He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

Chapter 21

³⁰*There is* no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Chapter 23

²³Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Chapter 24

³Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established

⁷Wisdom *is* too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

¹³My son, eat thou honey, because *it is* good; and the honeycomb, *which is* sweet to thy taste: ¹⁴*So shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* unto thy soul: when thou hast found *it*, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

Chapter 29

³Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance.

The Wise Man In Proverbs

Chapter 10

⁸The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

²³*It is* as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Chapter 11

²⁹He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool *shall be* servant to the wise of heart.

Chapter 12

⁸A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised. ⁹*He that is* despised, and hath a servant, *is* better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

²³A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

Chapter 13

¹⁶Every prudent *man* dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open *his* folly.

Chapter 14

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

⁸The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way: but the folly of fools *is* deceit.

¹⁵The simple believeth every word: but the prudent *man* looketh well to his going. ¹⁶A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

¹⁸The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

²⁴The crown of the wise *is* their riches: *but* the foolishness of fools *is* folly.

³³Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: *but that which is* in the midst of fools is made known.

Chapter 15

⁷The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.

¹⁴The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

²⁰A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. ²¹Folly *is* joy to *him that is* destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

²⁴The way of life *is* above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

Chapter 16

²⁰He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he.

²³The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

Chapter 17

²A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

¹⁰A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

Chapter 21

²⁰*There is* treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

²²A wise *man* scalesh the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Chapter 22

³A prudent *man* foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

Chapter 24

⁵A wise man *is* strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

⁹The thought of foolishness *is* sin: and the scorner *is* an abomination to men.

Chapter 27

¹²A prudent *man* foreseeeth the evil, *and* hideth himself; *but* the simple pass on, *and* are punished.

Chapter 29

⁸Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise *men* turn away wrath.

¹¹A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards.

²⁶He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Wise vs. Foolish

Chapter 10

⁸The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

²³*It is* as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Chapter 11

²⁹He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool *shall be* servant to the wise of heart.

Chapter 12

⁸A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised. ⁹*He that is* despised,

and hath a servant, *is* better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

²³A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

Chapter 13

¹⁶Every prudent *man* dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open *his* folly.

Chapter 14

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

⁸The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way: but the folly of fools *is* deceit.

¹⁵The simple believeth every word: but the prudent *man* looketh well to his going. ¹⁶A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

¹⁸The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

²⁴The crown of the wise *is* their riches: *but* the foolishness of fools *is* folly.

³³Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: *but that which is* in the midst of fools is made known.

Chapter 15

⁷The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.

¹⁴The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

²⁰A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. ²¹Folly *is* joy to *him that is* destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

²⁴The way of life *is* above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

Chapter 16

²⁰He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he.

²³The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

Chapter 17

²A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

¹⁰A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.